

# Hymns of Guru Nanak



**Translated by: Khushwant Singh**  
**Illustrations: Arpita Singh**

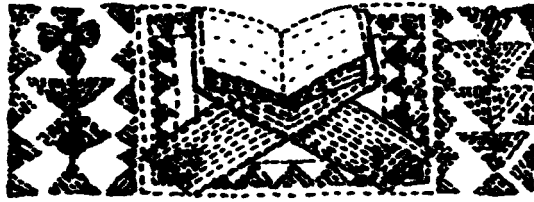


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# **Hymns of Guru Nanak**

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*Translated by*  
**Khushwant Singh**

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**Arpita Singh**



**Orient Longman**



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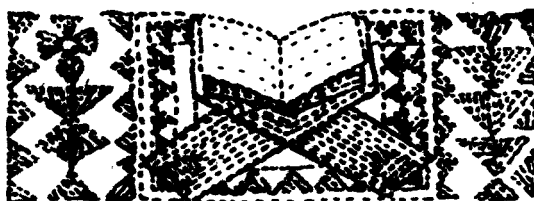
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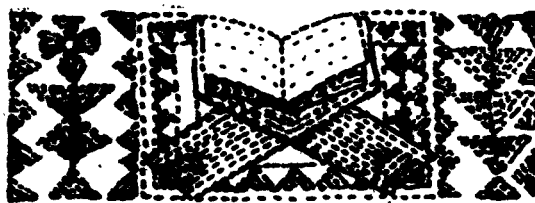


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## Preface

'Use your intelligence in serving God and in gaining merit; use your brain to read and understand what you read and how you give in charity. This is the only way; the rest is the doing of the devil,' writes Nanak. Those who do not use their brains and intelligence to unravel the secrets of the divine word, Nanak castigates as 'real donkeys' braying with undeserved pride.

It is not easy to 'unravel the secrets' of Nanak's words. The *Adi Granth* contains almost a thousand hymns of Nanak under eighteen different ragas. (The *Granth* is divided into thirty-one ragas or melodies in which the hymns are sung.) The arrangement is therefore not according to subject-matter but dictated by musical considerations and the chronological order of the gurus and the saint-poets whose compositions are included in the sacred anthology. Besides this fact there are other difficulties. There is no reliable evidence regarding the time or circumstance in which the hymns were composed. Diction, dialect and style vary enormously. All we can accept with certainty is the version of the Life History which says that Nanak always carried a bag strung on his shoulder into which he put

hymns as he composed them. It is also likely that the ragas in which they were to be sung were chosen by Nanak and his companion, the Muslim rebeck-player, Mardana. Guru Arjun scrutinized all the writings ascribed to the guru that he could obtain and on the basis of either handwriting or the thought-content or some other evidence, accepted 985 hymns as genuine. No manuscript in Guru Nanak's own handwriting is known to be extant.

I had hoped very much to be able to put the hymns I have translated captioned under different themes with which they dealt. This has not been possible as most hymns do in fact touch upon a variety of themes. I have, consequently, accepted the traditional pattern of the *Adi Granth*. The Morning Prayer, *Japji* and the hymn to the seasons — *Bara Mah* (the twelve months) — have been translated in full. In the case of the dawn hymns, *Asa-di-var* and the dialogue with Yogis, *Siddha Goshta*, I have selected a few verses for translation and given a synopsis in prose of the others. The remaining hymns appear in the order of ragas of the sacred scripture.

KHUSHWANT SINGH

# Life of Guru Nanak

‘On the night of the full moon in the month of Vaisakh in Samvat 1526,’ says the more authentic version—Mehervan’s *Janam Sakhi*—on the life of Guru Nanak, ‘Tripta, the wife of Mehta Kalian Das Bedi of Talwandi Rae Bhoie, was in labour. Three-quarters of the night had passed. The morning star shone bright in the eastern sky; it was the hour of early dawn when she was delivered of her second child, a son.’

Nanak’s birth was thus on 15 April 1469. However, in order to continue an old tradition, the event is celebrated on the full moon night in the month of November. As to the place of his birth, it is thought that the name Nanak was given to the child because he was born in the house of his maternal grandparents or *nankey* which was either in Kahna Kacha or Chalewal, two villages in the district of Lahore.

Nanak was a precocious child; smiling and sitting up in early infancy. When he was only five years old, people noticed that he did not play with other boys but spoke words of wisdom well beyond his years. The people’s reactions were interesting. Whosoever heard him, Hindu or Muslim, was certain that God spoke through the little boy—and this belief grew stronger as Nanak grew older.

At the age of seven Nanak was taken to a pandit to be taught. Nanak apparently turned the tables on his teacher and his discourse with his teacher is the subject of a beautiful hymn in Sri Raga.

The only real learning (says Nanak) is the worship of God; the rest is of no avail, and wisdom devoid of the knowledge of the creator is but the noose of ignorance about one’s neck. He that repeats the name of the Lord in this world, will reap his reward in the world to come.

Do you know (says Nanak) how and why men come into this world and why they depart? Why some become rich and others poor? Why some hold court while others go begging door to door—and even of the beggars why some receive alms while others do not? Take it from me, O pandit, that those who have enjoyed power and ease in this life and not given praise to the Lord will surely be punished—just as the *dhobi* (washerman) beats dirty clothes on slabs of stones, so will they be beaten; just as an oilman grinds oilseeds to extract oil will they be ground; just as the miller crushes grain between his millstones will they be crushed. On the other hand, those that are poor and those that have to beg for their living, who spend their lives in prayer will receive their honour and reward in the divine court of justice.

He that has fear of God (says Nanak) is free from all fears. But monarch or commoner, he



that fears not God will be reduced to dust and be reborn to suffer the pangs of hell. That which is gained by falsehood becomes unclean. The only truth is God. Our only love should be for God who is immortal; why love those that will perish—son, wife, power, wealth, youth—all are subject to decay and death. [Mehervan: *Janam Sakhi*].

A year later Nanak was sent to the village mosque to learn Arabic and other subjects. Here, too, Nanak astounded his teacher:

The mullah wrote down the Arabic alphabet from *alif* to *yea*. Nanak at once mastered the writing and the pronunciation of the letters, and within a few days had learnt arithmetic, accounting, and everything else the mullah could teach. The mullah marvelled, 'Great God! Other children have been struggling for ten years and cannot tell one letter from another, and this child has by Thy grace learnt all within a matter of days.' [Mehervan: *Janam Sakhi*].

Nanak was a moody child and often refused to speak to anyone for days on end. He wandered about the woods absorbed in observing the phenomenon of nature: the advent of spring with its bees and butterflies; the searing heat of summer that burned up all vegetation followed by the monsoon which miraculously restored life and turned the countryside green; the ways of the birds and beasts of the jungle. All this mystery baffled young Nanak's mind and he began to ponder over the character of the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer—and to question the efficacy of ritual both Hindu and Muslim.

When he was only nine Nanak demanded of the Brahmin priest who had come to invest him with the sacred thread,

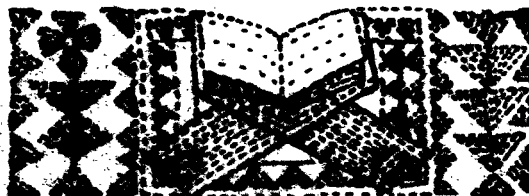
*janeau*: 'Do the Brahmins and Kshatriyas lose their faith if they lose their sacred thread? Is their faith maintained by their thread or by their deeds?'

Nanak was the despair of his parents. He refused to do any kind of work. If he was sent to graze cattle, he let them stray into people's fields; if he was given money to do trade, he would give it away to the poor and the hungry. He was saved from the wrath of his father by his mother and sister—and by the village-folk who bore witness to the many miracles they had seen emanate from Nanak.

At the age of sixteen Nanak was married to Sulakhni, daughter of Mul Chand Chona of Batala. They had two sons, Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das, and perhaps a daughter or daughters who died in infancy. Family life did not divert Nanak's attention for too long. His moods would suddenly descend upon him and he would remain silent for many days and then become argumentative on subjects such as God, man, death, ritual and moral values. And he remained as indifferent to making a living as he had been before he became a husband and father.

One evening in July (says Mehervan's *Janam Sakhi*), the skies over Talwandi were darkened by black monsoon clouds and it began to pour. At night the sky was rent with flashes of lightning and there was a fearful crash of thunder. Nanak began to sing hymns in praise of the Lord. His mother came to him and said, 'Son it is time you had some sleep.' Just then the cuckoo called 'peeoh, peeoh', and Nanak replied, 'Mother, when my rival is awake, how can I sleep?'

It became evident to the people that it







would not be long before Nanak took the hermit's path in search of truth and, once when a group of holy men happened to pass through Talwandi on their way to a pilgrimage, Nanak's mother expressed her apprehensions.

'I know,' she said, 'that one of these days you too will be leaving me to go on a pilgrimage. I do not complain but would like to know what is gained by going to holy places.'

'Nothing,' replied Nanak categorically. 'It is in our own body that we have to build our temples, free our minds from the snares of *maya*, renounce evil deeds and give praise to our Maker. This is as good as going to bathe in the sixty-eight holy places of pilgrimage.'

'Then tell these holy men that they pursue the path of error,' said Nanak's mother. 'Tell them that God can be found in their own houses.'

'Let each one find his own path,' replied Nanak. 'Why should I worry my head about their methods?'

The beauty of the woodland in spring cast its usual spell. But, for Nanak, the beauty was now tinged with anguish for he needed to know the truth of the reality that did not change with the seasons. A beautiful hymn in Raga Basant sums up the feeling:

It was springtime. The trees were in new leaf; many wild shrubs were in flower. The woods around Talwandi were a beauteous sight. Young men of his village came to him and said, 'Nanak, it is spring; come with us and let us behold the wonders of nature.'

'The month of *Chaitra*,' said Nanak, 'is the most beautiful of the twelve months of the year because all is green and every living thing seems to blossom into fullness. But my heart

does not rejoice at the sight of the blossoming of nature until it is blessed with the name of the Lord. We must first subdue our ego, sing praises of the Lord and then our hearts too will be fragrant.'

'We do not understand what you say,' they protested, 'we want to tell you that in the woods the trees are so green that we cannot find words to describe them; there are varieties of flowers whose beauty is beyond the speech of man; there are fruits whose lusciousness is beyond praise; and beneath them the shade is cool and fragrant. You should see these things with your own eyes.'

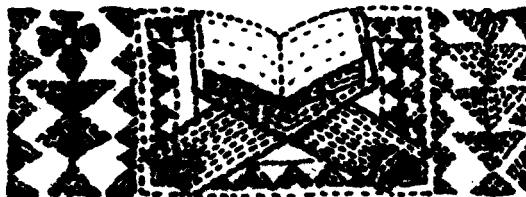
'The Lord's grace,' says Nanak, 'gave the trees their new foliage. His decrees covered them with blossoms of great beauty and filled their fruits with sweet nectarine. When they have their foliage the Lord makes their shade cool and fragrant. I have such foliage in my own heart with similar flowers, fruit and cool shade, and people seek shelter under it.'

'The great God has given us eyes to see, ears to hear and a mouth to speak and eat the corn that grows. Why has he given us these things?'

'He has given you eyes not merely to gape at the woods but to behold His creation and marvel at it; ears to hear godly counsel; the tongue to speak the truth. Thereafter whatever you receive is your true wealth and sustenance.'

The young men did not understand all that Nanak said. They tried once more to persuade him to come out with them. 'Spring comes but once a year and nature dons its garb of green but once. Then comes the fall. Trees lose their foliage and the woods are barren of beauty. If you want to see nature at its best, see it in the month of *Chaitra*.'

'Months and seasons ever come and go and come again,' replied Nanak. 'Trees and bushes attain foliage at one season, lose it at another and once again become green when the season turns. The lesson for you is to see that those who do good acts reap the fruit of good action



and those who do evil, wither and die; those who take the name of the Lord ever have spring in their hearts. The grape only receives its juice during the monsoon but the good man receives his reward at all times of the year and all times of the day and night. Human birth is the springtime of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth; it is the time for you to plant the seed of good action and reap its fruit in life thereafter; in this do not tarry.'

As Nanak grew even more detached from the ties of living, he took no notice of his wife or children, of his goods or of the people about him. His life became one of prayer, almsgiving, ablution and the seeking after knowledge; *nam*, *dan*, *isnān* and *gyan*. Lust, anger and pride fell away as Nanak's heart was filled with truth and blessed contentment. Nanak lived in this state 'like one drunk' for some years till his sister, Nanaki, now married, took the situation in hand. She persuaded her husband, Jai Ram, to invite her brother over to Sultanpur, where they lived, and get him employment with his master, Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi.

Nanak went to Sultanpur accompanied by a family servant, a Muslim named Mardana, who was to become his closest companion. Mardana, the *Janam Sakhi* tells us, came from the brewer caste, and was a gifted musician. Mardana played the *rabab* and also sang hymns.

Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi was impressed with the integrity of his new storekeeper and accountant. Nanak would not accept bribes from agents and refused to follow the corrupt practices of his predecessors. The people in Sultanpur could not stop praising Nanak.

In Sultanpur Nanak organized his daily

life in an ideal manner. Every evening he and Mardana would sing hymns before retiring to bed. Nanak would wake up while it was still dark, and, after a dip in the river close by, sing hymns with the coterie of his followers. After which, at the appointed hour, Nanak would go to the court of the Nawab and apply himself to his work.

Though he won the approbation of his employer and those he dealt with, Nanak was unhappy.

'This has been suddenly put around my neck like a noose,' he said. He began to say to himself that if he had to serve anyone, wouldn't it be wiser to serve his own Master who is within him instead of the poison without? It is all very well to seek knowledge and wisdom but one cannot escape the noose of *maya* without sowing seeds of good actions. One cannot earn wages without service and it is the love of the wage which stands in the way of renunciation. Why not then serve the great Master who is the Lord of all? Nanak postponed his decision with the thought: 'I, Nanak, am no better than others; others are no worse than I; what the Lord wills, Nanak will honour and obey.' [Mehervan: *Janam Sakhi*.]

It was, however, clear that the time of decision was at hand.

Nanak's days were spent in noting down receipts and expenses. At the end of the day he added up the totals to make sure they tallied with the accounts. He often had to work late into the night adding up his figures under the light of the lamp. One night he got angry with himself and threw away his pen and account books. He asked himself, 'Why have I got involved in these affairs and forgotten my Maker? Am I destined to spend my days and







nights writing accounts? It is a vast net in which I find myself caught; if I let the days go by the noose will close tighter around me. If I have to burn the midnight oil, it should be for something worthwhile.'

Nanak pondered over these things late into the night and, instead of returning home, went to the stream to bathe. He prayed, 'Lord send me a guru, a guide who will show me the path that leads to Thy mansion.'

That very night God revealed Himself to Nanak. Nanak prayed fervently and begged the Lord to forgive him and remove him from the world which had so ensnared him. The Lord asked Nanak, 'Why are you so agitated? You have done no wrong.'

'I have let my mind turn from Thee,' replied Nanak, 'to the petty trifles of the world.'

'Your errors have I forgiven. The *maya* that you complain of is also a part of Me. What you see is but its shadow.'

'Lord destroy in me the longing for worldly gain.'

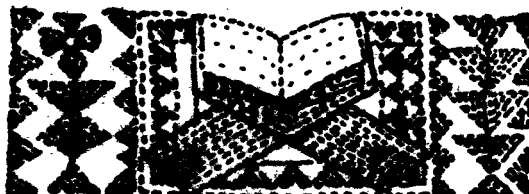
'Nanak you shall no more crave for worldly gain. I am pleased with you. On you be My blessing.' [Mehervan: *Janam Sakhi*].

The mystic experience that finally made Nanak take up his mission is put at different times and is variously described. The incident took place in August 1507 on the third night before the full moon.

The moon had set, [says the *Janam Sakhi*] but it was dark and the stars still twinkled in the sky when Nanak, followed by his servant, went to the river. Nanak took off his *kurta* and *dhoti* and stepped into the stream.

He closed his nostrils and ducked into the water. He did not come up. The servant waited a while and then, panicking, ran up and down the river bank crying for Nanak. A strange voice rose from the waters saying, 'Do not lose patience.'

6



Mardana, however, ran back to Sultanpur and sobbed out his story. A great commotion took place in the town because Nanak was loved by all—Hindus and Muslims, the rich and the poor. When Daulat Khan Lodhi heard of the mishap he was most distressed. 'Friends,' he said, 'Nanak was a man of God. Let us dredge the river and rescue his corpse.'

While the people of Sultanpur were dredging the river, Nanak was conducted into the presence of God.

The Almighty gave him a bowl of milk. 'Nanak, drink this bowl,' He commanded. 'It is not milk as it may seem; this is nectar (amrit). It will give thee power of prayer; love of worship, truth and contentment.'

Nanak drank the nectar and was overcome. He made another obeisance. The Almighty then blessed him. 'I release thee from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth; he that sets his eyes on you with faith will be saved; he that hears your words with conviction will be helped by Me; he that you forgive will be forgiven by Me. I grant thee salvation. Nanak go back to the evil world and teach men and women to pray (*nam*), to give in charity (*dan*) and to live cleanly (*isnan*). Do good to the world and redeem it in the age of sin (*Kaliyuga*).' [Mehervan: *Janam Sakhi*].

At dawn, three days later, on the full moon in August Nanak re-emerged from the Bein. Nanak was thirty-six years old and now a changed and determined man. While the people clamoured around him acclaiming him a new messiah, he paid no heed. 'What have I to do with men like these!' he said to himself. He gave away all he had to the poor. He even cast off his clothes keeping for himself only a loin-cloth. He left his home and joined a

band of hermits.

Soon people began expressing themselves loudly. 'Nanak was a sensible man,' some said, 'but now he has lost his head.' 'He is stricken with the fear of the Lord,' said others, 'and is no longer himself.' 'Something in the river has bitten him,' the rest were convinced, and took to calling him 'mad, bewitched.'

'It is the Lord who has possessed me and made me mad,' explained Nanak. 'If I find merit in the eyes of my Lord, then will I have justified my waywardness.'

'Nanak, you are a different person today from what you were,' the people exclaimed. 'Tell us the path you intend to take. We only know of two ways; one of the Hindus and the other of the Mussalmans.'

'There is no Hindu, there is no Mussalman,' replied Nanak.

'You talk in cryptic language,' they said. 'In this world we understand the two ways—of Hinduism and of Islam.'

'There are no Mussalmans, there are no Hindus,' repeated Nanak. [Mehervan: *Janam Sakhi*].

Nanak spent another two years in and around Sultanpur before he forsook the habitations of men and took to the forests and solitude. The faithful Mardana was his sole companion. He took on a strange dress: a cloth cap (*seli topee*), a long cloak worn by Muslim mendicants, a beggar's bowl, staff and prayer mat. When asked why he wore this outlandish garb, Nanak replied, 'I am dressed like a clown for the amusement of my Master. If my apparel pleases Him, I will be happy.'

Nanak's first journey took him eastwards to Hindu centres of pilgrimage. His biog-



raphies have fabricated many incidents based on Nanak's hymns—many of which depict the Guru's love for nature.

One day, says Mehervan's *Janam Sakhi*, Nanak and Mardana, while travelling, espied a flock of swans flying overhead. Nanak was bewitched and began to run after them with his eyes fixed on the birds. Mardana followed him. The flock descended in a field and let Nanak approach them without showing any sign of fear—for Nanak was a man of God, who harmed no one. Nanak admired the birds; their long slender necks, their luminous dark eyes and their silver-white plumage. He wondered whether these birds—who spanned the heavens—had ever cast their eyes on their Maker. Why, he asked himself, should such beautiful birds wander restlessly across the continents—from Khorasan in Central Asia to Hindustan and back again to Khorasan? He blessed the swans and bade them godspeed on their journey.

Another hymn illustrates the political and social conditions of the time through picturing an incident that occurred in the suburbs of the capital city, Delhi.

The city was at the time ruled by a bloodthirsty Pathan king (Ibrahim Lodhi). Nanak's fame had preceded him and large crowds of citizens, sightseers and seekers after truth, Muslims as well as Hindus, came to see him. Near Nanak's camp was a place where beggars and mendicants were fed free of charge by the wicked king. The people told Nanak of their king's evil ways and how he expiated his sins by feeding beggars.

Nanak spoke to them, 'Listen ye children of God! This charity of the king is of no consequence; it is the act of a blind man stumbling in the dark. He is worse than a blind man

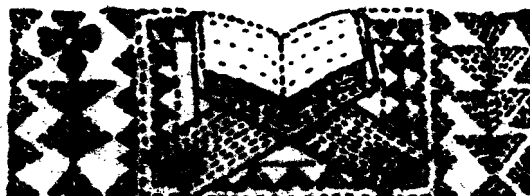
because even if his eyes lose their light, a blind man can hear and speak and comprehend, but one who has lost his mind has lost all. What avail is the giving of alms to one who sins by day and gives in charity at night? A stone dam can hold the flood but if the dam bursts you cannot repair the breach by plastering mud. Evil is like the flood, the stone dam like faith. If faith weakens, the dam will give way and the flood will sweep all before it. Its force is then so great that no boat nor boatman dare embark on it to save its victims. Then nothing abides save the Name of the Lord.' [Mehervan: *Janam Sakhi*.]

We do not know how long Nanak stayed in Delhi. He proceeded to Hardwar on the Ganges. It was apparently at a time of some religious festival when large crowds had turned up to bathe in the 'holy' river. Mardana was very impressed with the sight and said to Nanak: 'What a lot of good people there are in the world! They must be genuinely desirous of improving themselves that brings them on a pilgrimage.'

Nanak was not so impressed by the sight of the people "washing away their sins" by the ritual of bathing. 'Only a bullion dealer can tell the difference between the genuine and the counterfeit,' he replied, 'and at this place there is no bullion dealer.'

Nanak and Mardana stayed at Hardwar for some time in order to be present at the Baisakhi (March-April) fair. It was on this occasion that an incident, that made Nanak famous, took place.

There was a large crowd bathing in the river. Nanak saw them face eastwards and throw palmfuls of water to the sun. Nanak entered the stream and started throwing water westwards.







'In the name of Rama!' exclaimed the shocked pilgrims, 'who is this man who throws water to the west? He is either mad or a Muslim.' They approached Nanak and asked him why he offered water in the wrong direction. Nanak asked them why they threw it eastwards to the sun.

'We offer it to our dead ancestors,' they replied.

'Where are your dead ancestors?'

'With the gods in heaven.'

'How far is the abode of the gods?'

'49 crore kos from here.'

'Does the water get that far?'

'Without doubt! But why do you throw it westwards?'

Nanak replied, 'My home and lands are near Lahore. It has rained everywhere except on my land. I am therefore watering my fields.'

'Man of God, how can you water your fields near Lahore from this place?'

'If you can send it 49 crore kos to the abode of the gods, why can't I send it to Lahore which is only a couple of hundred kos away!'

The people were abashed at this reply. 'He is not mad,' they said, 'he is surely a great seer.' [Mehervan: *Janam Sakhi*.]

A large number of Hindu pilgrims who had foregathered at Hardwar became disciples of the guru. He stayed on there after the Baisakhi festival preaching to the people:

'The most precious gift of God is human birth because it is by reason and responsible action as human beings that we can get out of the vicious circle of life, death and rebirth and attain salvation. One must abolish duality in order to be a complete devotee.'

'And how does one overcome duality?' they asked.

'By faith in the One; by hearing and speaking of the One; by never abandoning belief in Him.

By austerity, truth, restraint in his heart.' [Mehervan: *Janam Sakhi*.]

From Hardwar, Nanak and Mardana proceeded to Prayag (modern Allahabad) where the rivers Jamuna and the Saraswati join the Ganges. From Prayag, the guru went to Banaras, the centre of Hindu learning and orthodoxy. The *Adi Granth* describes the many encounters Guru Nanak had with pandits who chided him for his unorthodoxy and probed his knowledge of the sacred texts.

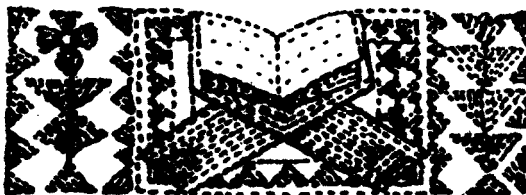
'It matters not how many cartloads of learning you have nor what learned company you keep; it matters not how many boat-loads of books you carry nor the tree of knowledge; it matters not how many years or months you spend in study nor with what passion and single-mindedness you pursue knowledge. Only one thing really matters, the rest is but a whirlwind of the ego.'

'And what is the one thing that matters?' they asked.

Nanak replied—'There are a hundred falsehoods, but this one sovereign truth—that unless truth enters the soul all service and study is false.'

Nanak was equally forthright about the pandits' fetish of the purity of their cooking vessels and kitchens. He decided to draw their attention to this in his usual manner of highlighting the incongruous aspects.

Nanak went with them and saw with what care they bathed, scrubbed their utensils, swept the ground near the hearth, washed the vegetables and cooked the food. When one plate was laid before Nanak, he refused to eat from it. 'I am not satisfied with the purity of the food you



offer me. It is prepared by one who is full of sin and sins cannot be cleansed by washing the body.'

The pandits did not fully comprehend the import of Nanak's words and prepared the meal afresh. This time they dug up the earth and re-plastered it; they even washed the logs of wood before kindling them. Again Nanak refused to partake of the meal and continued his sermon. 'You err in believing that purity can be gained by scrubbing and washing. That does not apply even to inanimate things like wood, dung-fuel or water, much less to a human being. Man is unclean when his heart is tainted with greed, his tongue coated with falsehood, his eyes envious of the beauty of another's wife or his wealth, his ears dirty with slander. All these can only be cleansed by knowledge. Basically all men are good but often they pursue a predetermined path to hell.'

Nanak was questioned on his attitude towards the sacred texts of the Hindus: 'The Vedas say one thing and you another. People who read the Vedas do not follow their teachings and now you confuse them more than ever. Why don't you either combine your teaching with that of the Vedas or separate them more distinctly?'

Nanak replied, 'The Vedas tell you of the difference between good and evil. Sin is the seed of hell; chastity the seed of paradise. Knowledge and the teaching of the Vedas complement each other; they are to one another as merchandise to the merchant.'

It would appear that by this time Nanak had decided that his faith was to be an eclectic one for he sang hymns of Namdev, Kabir, Ravi Dass, Sain and Beni.

His new disciples tried to persuade Nanak to settle down in Banaras. Nanak refused to do so. 'I pursue the one and only path of devotion to God,' he replied, 'your learning and religion do not appeal to me and I have no interest in trade other than the name of God for God Himself has extinguished the desire for acquisition in me.'

Piecing together evidence from other sources we find that the first journey apparently took the guru as far east as Bengal and Assam. On his way back to the Punjab, he spent some days at Jagannath Puri. He travelled round the Punjab and visited the Sufi headquarters at Pak Pattan before he set out on his second long voyage—this time southwards. He is said to have travelled through Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Konkan and Rajasthan—though there is little evidence to show that he did so.

Nanak sojourned in the Himalayas for some time before he set out on his last and longest journey. This was westwards to the Muslims' holy cities Mecca and Medina as far as Baghdad. It was on this journey that another incident took place. He was staying in a mosque and fell asleep with his feet towards the Ka'ba—an act considered of grave disrespect to the house of God. When the mullah came to say his prayers, he shook Nanak rudely and said: 'O servant of God, thou hast thy feet towards Ka'ba, the house of God; why hast thou done such a thing?'

Nanak replied: 'Then turn my feet towards some direction where there is no God nor the Ka'ba.'

By the time Nanak returned home, the Mughal Babar had invaded the Punjab. The Guru was at Saidpur when the town was



sacked by the invaders. Nanak makes many references to the havoc caused by this invasion.

Nanak was by this time too old to undertake any more strenuous journeys. He settled in the village Kartarpur where he spent the last years of his life preaching to the people. His disciples came to be known as Sikhs (from the Sanskrit *shishya* or Pali *sikkha*). He built a *dharamshala* (abode of faith) whose inmates followed a strict code of discipline: rising well before dawn, bathing and then foregathering in the *dharamshala* for prayer and hymn-singing. They went about their daily chores and met again for the evening service. At the *dharamshala* was the *guru-ka-langar* (the guru's kitchen) where all who came were obliged to break bread without distinction of caste or religion.

Among Nanak's disciples was a man called Lehna whom Nanak chose in preference to his sons as his successor. Said Nanak to Lehna: 'Thou art Angad, a part of my body,' and asked another disciple to daub Angad's forehead with saffron and proclaim him the second guru.

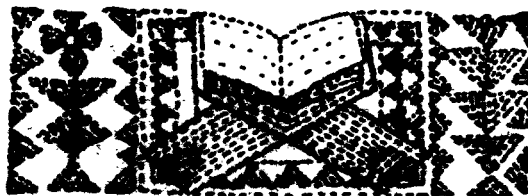
Nanak died in the early hours of the morning of 22 September 1539. He was a poet and lover of nature to the last. As he lay on his deathbed he recalled the scenes of his childhood. 'The tamarisk must be in flower now; the pampas grass must be waving its woolly head in the breeze; the cicadas must be calling in the lonely glades,' he said before he closed his eyes in eternal sleep.

Mehervan's *Janam Sakhi* records the manner his body was laid to rest. Said the Mussalmans: 'we will bury him'; the Hindus: 'we will cremate him'; Nanak said:

You place flowers on either side, Hindus on my right, Muslims on my left. Those whose flowers remain fresh tomorrow will have their way.' He asked them to pray. When the prayer was over, Nanak pulled the sheet over him and went to eternal sleep. Next morning when they raised the sheet they found nothing. The flowers of both communities were fresh. The Hindus took theirs; the Muslims took those that they had placed.

It is little wonder that Nanak came to be revered as the king or shah of the holy men, the guru of the Hindus and the peer of the Mussalmans:

Baba Nanak Shah Fakeer  
Hindu ka Guru, Mussalman ka Peer



# Japji, the Morning Prayer

*Japji* is the most important prayer of the Sikhs. It was recognized as such by the fifth guru, Arjun, when he compiled the *Adi Granth* and gave it the first place in the sacred anthology. According to tradition when some disciples complained that the language of *Japji* was too involved and needed to be elucidated through explanatory hymns, Guru Arjun replied that the entire *Adi Granth* was but an elucidation of *Japji*.

We are not quite certain of the circumstances and the date of the composition of *Japji*. According to most *Janam Sakhis* the opening lines were recited by Guru Nanak during his mystical experience at Sultanpur when he disappeared in the river Bein. This would make *Japji* amongst Nanak's earliest compositions and before he set out on his distant voyages, i.e., some time between A.D. 1500 and 1507.

Most Sikh scholars do not accept this version of the *Janam Sakhis* and are of the opinion that *Japji* as well as compositions such as *Asa-di-Var*, *Siddha Goshta* and *Barah Mah* show a maturity of style and thought-content which indicates their having been composed after the guru had finished his travels and had settled down at Kartarpur. Dr Mohan Singh cites a seventeenth century manuscript which states that while the guru was at Kartarpur, he was summoned to the presence of God and ordered to compose the *Japji*. He accordingly addressed his chief disciple and destined successor, Angad, in the following words: 'Man,

it is the command of the great Creator that I must compose a hymn of praise.' Whereupon Nanak handed the entire treasury of his own compositions to Angad with the behest: 'Now it is for you to make up the *Jap*.' And then in Nanak's presence, Angad arranged the verses in order to make up the *Jap*. He selected thirty-eight verses out of Nanak's compositions to get the essence of his teaching. According to Dr Mohan Singh and Professor Sahib Singh the probable date of the composition of the verses of the *Japji* in the order they appear today was A.D. 1532, seven years before the guru's death.

*Japji* follows the traditional pattern of compositions of the times beginning with an invocation to God (*mangalacharan*) and ending with thanksgiving on the successful completion of the work.

*Japji* opens with a statement on the nature of God: His uniqueness, omnipotence, immortality, etc. and reaffirms His being both Truth and Reality. It concludes with another statement to the effect that knowledge of God is obtained only through the grace of the guru. This is the *mool* mantra (root or seed mantra) of the Sikh faith. These lines precede all Sikh prayers as *mangalacharan*, exactly as *Bismillah-hir-Rahman-i-Rahim*—in the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful—appears before every chapter of the Koran. They are the standard form of *diksha* (gift) that a guru gives to his disciple on initiation (guru-mantra).





The next few lines re-state the *mool* mantra re-emphasizing the timeless and *sat* (meaning both Truth and Reality) qualities of God. Thereafter begins the *jap*.

The quest for truth is stated in the first verse. Since the aim of life is to know God and be united with Him and neither thinking, nor meditation, nor penance, nor any other device reveals the secret, how can we tear the veil of illusion that covers our eyes and get to know the Truth? The rest of the verses are an answer to these questions with various diversions from the theme of how to observe the ordinances of God. Four verses at the end (34-37) indicate the steps by which man progresses to spiritual emancipation. Starting from the earth which is the realm of law, he proceeds to acquire learning in the realm of knowledge. The third stage is the realm of beauty and the fourth the realm of action. The journey ends in the realm of truth, and merger with God. The last verse of *Japji* sums up all that it takes to achieve perfection: self-control, patience, knowledge, fear of God and love of God and earnest prayer.

### JAPJI

There is One God  
His Name is Truth.  
He is the Creator,  
He is without fear and without hate.  
He is beyond time Immortal,  
His Spirit pervades the universe.  
He is not born,  
Nor does He die to be born again,  
He is self-existent.  
By the guru's grace shalt thou worship Him.

### Jap

Before time itself  
There was Truth,  
When time began to run its course  
He became the Truth.  
Even now, He is the Truth

And sayeth Nanak  
Evermore shall Truth prevail.

1

Not by thought alone  
Can He be known,  
Though one think  
A hundred thousand times;  
Not in solemn silence  
Nor in deep meditation.  
Accumulation of the wealth of the world  
Cannot appease the hunger for truth,  
No, by none of these,  
Nor by a hundred thousand other devices,  
Can God be reached.  
How then shall the Truth be known?  
How the veil of false illusion torn?  
O Nanak, thus runneth the writ divine,  
Abide by His will and make it thine.

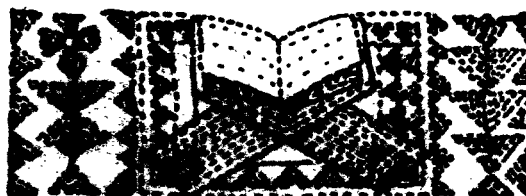
2

By Him are all forms created,  
But His ordinances we do not know,  
By Him infused with life and blessed,  
By Him are some to excellence elated,  
Others born lowly and depressed.  
By His writ some have pleasure, others pain;  
By His grace some are saved,  
Others doomed to die, re-live and die  
again.  
His will encompasseth all, there be none  
beside.  
O Nanak, he, who knows, hath no ego  
and no pride.

3

Who has the power to praise His might?  
Who has the measure of His bounty?  
Of His portents who has the sight?  
Who can value His virtue, His deeds, His  
charity?  
Who has the knowledge of His wisdom?  
Of His deep, impenetrable thought?  
How worship Him who creates life,  
Then destroys,

14



And having destroyed doth re-create?  
 How worship Him who appeareth far  
 Yet is ever present and proximate?  
 There is no end to His description,  
 Though the speakers and their  
     speeches be legion.  
 He the Giver ever giveth,  
 We who receive grow weary,  
 On His bounty humanity liveth  
 From primal age to posterity,  
 O Nanak, He is joyous and carefree.

4

God is the Master, God is Truth,  
 His name spellleth love divine,  
 His creatures ever cry: 'O give, O give',  
 He the bounteous doth never decline.  
 What then in offering shall we bring  
 That we may see His court above?  
 What then shall we say in speech  
 That hearing may evoke His love?  
 In the ambrosial hours of a fragrant dawn  
 On truth and greatness ponder in  
     meditation,  
 Through action determine how thou be  
     born,  
 Through grace alone will come salvation.  
 O Nanak, this need we know alone,  
 That God and Truth are two in one.

5

He cannot be proved, for He is uncreated;  
 He is without matter, self-existent.  
 They that serve shall honoured be,  
 O Nanak, the Lord is most excellent.  
 Praise the Lord, hear them that do Him  
     praise,  
 In your hearts His name be graven  
 Sorrows from your soul erase  
 And make your hearts a joyous haven.  
 The guru's word hath Vedic learning,  
 For though it be the guru's word  
 God Himself speaks therein.  
 Thus run the words of the guru:  
 'God is the Destroyer, Preserver and Creator,

God is the Goddess too.  
 Words to describe are hard to find,  
 I would venture if I knew.'  
 This alone the guru my teacher taught :  
 There is but one Lord of all creation,  
     Forget Him not.

6

If it pleases the Lord  
 In holy waters would I bathe,  
 If it pleases Him not,  
 Worthless is that pilgrimage.  
 This is the law of all creation,  
 That nothing's gained save by action.  
 Thy mind, wherein buried lie  
 Precious stones, jewels, gems,  
 Shall opened be if thou but try  
 And hearken to the guru's word.  
 This alone the guru my teacher taught,  
 There is but one Lord of all creation,  
     Forget Him not.

7

Were life's span extended to the four ages  
 And ten times more,  
 Were one known over the nine shores  
 Ever in humanity's fore,  
 Were one to achieve greatness  
 With a name noised over the earth,  
 If one found not favour with the Lord  
 What would it all be worth ?  
 Among the worms be as vermin,  
 By sinners be accused of sin.  
 O Nanak, the Lord fills the vicious with  
     virtue,  
 The virtuous maketh more true.  
 Knowest thou of any other  
 Who in turn could the Lord thus favour ?

8

By hearing the Word  
     Men achieve wisdom, saintliness, courage  
     and contentment.  
 By hearing the Word  
     Men learn of the earth, the power that

15



supports it, and the firmament.  
 By hearing the Word  
 Men learn of the upper and nether  
 regions, of islands and continents.  
 By hearing the Word  
 Men conquer the fear of death and the  
 elements.  
 O Nanak, the Word hath such magic for the  
 worshippers,  
 Those that hear, death do not fear.  
 Their sorrows end and sins disappear.

9

By hearing the Word  
 Mortals are to godliness raised.  
 By hearing the Word  
 The foul-mouthed are filled with pious  
 praise.  
 By hearing the Word  
 Are revealed the secrets of yoga, body  
 and of nature.  
 By hearing the Word  
 Is acquired the wisdom of all the scriptures.  
 O Nanak, the Word hath such magic for the  
 worshippers,  
 Those that hear, death do not fear,  
 Their sorrows end and sins disappear.

10

By hearing the Word  
 One learns of truth, contentment, and  
 becomes wise.  
 By hearing the Word  
 The need for pilgrimages does not arise.  
 By hearing the Word  
 The student achieves scholastic distinction.  
 By hearing the Word  
 The mind is easily led to meditation.  
 O Nanak, the Word hath such magic for the  
 worshippers,  
 Those that hear, death do not fear,  
 Their sorrows end and sins disappear.

11

By hearing the Word

One plumbs the depths of virtue's sea.  
 By hearing the Word  
 One acquires learning, holiness and  
 royalty.  
 By hearing the Word  
 The blind see and their paths are made  
 visible.  
 By hearing the Word  
 The fathomless becomes fordable.  
 O Nanak, the Word hath such magic for the  
 worshippers,  
 Those that hear, death do not fear,  
 Their sorrows end and sins disappear.

12

The believer's bliss one cannot describe,  
 He who endeavours regrets in the end,  
 There is no paper, pen, nor any scribe  
 Who can the believer's state comprehend.  
 The Name of the Lord is immaculate,  
 He who would know must have faith.

13

The believer hath wisdom and  
 understanding;  
 The believer hath knowledge of all the  
 spheres;  
 The believer shall not stumble in ignorance,  
 Nor of death have any fears.  
 The Name of the Lord is immaculate.  
 He who would know must have faith.

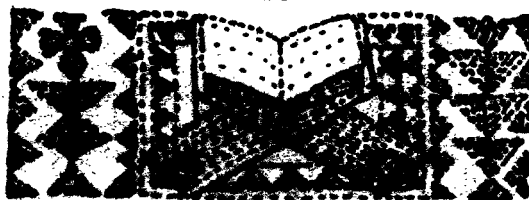
14

The believer's way is of obstructions free;  
 The believer is honoured in the presence  
 sublime;  
 The believer's path is not lost in error,  
 For faith hath taught him law divine.  
 The Name of the Lord is immaculate,  
 He who would know must have faith.

15

The believer reaches the gates of salvation;  
 His kith and kin he also saves.  
 Having saved himself, to his disciples he  
 shows the way.

16



They do not go a-begging, they do not go  
astray.

The Name of the Lord is immaculate,  
He who would know must have faith.

16

Thus are chosen the leaders of men,  
Thus honoured in God's estimation;  
Though they grace the courts of kings,  
Their minds are fixed on the guru alone.  
Their words are weighed with reason,  
They know that God's works are legion.  
Law which like the fabled bull supports  
the earth

Is of compassion born;  
Though it binds the world in harmony,  
Its strands are thin and worn.  
He who the truth would learn  
Must know of the bull and the load it bore,  
For there are worlds besides our own  
And beyond them many more.  
Who is it that bears these burdens?  
What power bears him that beareth them?  
Of creatures of diverse kinds and colours  
The ever-flowing pen hath made record.  
Can anyone write what it hath writ?  
Or say how great a task was it?  
How describe His beauty and His might?  
His bounty how estimate?  
How speak of Him who with one word  
Did the whole universe create,  
And made a thousand rivers flow therein?  
What might have I to praise Thy might?  
I have not power to give it praise.  
Whatever be Thy wish, I say Amen,  
Mayest Thou endure, O Formless One.

17

There is no count of those who pray,  
Nor of those who Thee adore;  
There is no count of those who worship,  
Nor of those who by penance set store.  
There is no count of those who read the  
holy books aloud,  
Nor of yogis whose minds are free of

worldly attachments,  
There is no count of sages immersed in  
thought and reason,  
Nor of those who love humanity and are  
benevolent.

There is no count of warriors who match  
their strength with steel,  
Nor of those who contemplate in peace  
and are silent.

What might have I to praise Thy might?  
I have not power to give it praise.  
Whatever be Thy wish, I say Amen,  
Mayest Thou endure, O Formless One.

18

There is no count of fools who will not see,  
Nor of thieves who live by fraud,  
There is no count of despots practising  
tyranny,  
Nor of those whose hands are soiled with  
blood,  
There is no count of those who sin and go  
free,  
Nor of liars caught in the web of falsehood,  
There is no count of the polluted who live  
on filth,  
Nor of the evil-tongued weighed down with  
calumny  
The lowly Nanak reasons thus  
Not once have I sacrificed my life to Thee  
Whatever be Thy wish, I say Amen,  
Mayest Thou endure, O Formless One.

19

There is no count of Thy names and  
habitations,  
Thy realm is beyond comprehension  
Foolish it is to try and count  
Myriads are Thy manifestations.  
Though by words alone we give Thee name  
and praise,  
And by words, reason, worship and Thy  
virtue compute;  
Though by words alone we write and speak  
And by words our ties with Thee constitute;

17



The Word does not its Creator bind,  
 What Thou ordainest we receive.  
 All creation is a manifestation of Thy Word,  
 Thy Name in all places do we find.  
 What might have I to praise Thy might?  
 I have not power to give it praise.  
 Whatever be Thy wish, I say Amen,  
 Mayest Thou endure, O Formless One.

20

As hands or feet besmirched with slime,  
 Water washes white;  
 As garments dark with grime  
 Rinsed with soap are made light;  
 So when sin soils the soul  
 Prayer alone shall make it whole.  
 Words do not the saint or sinner make,  
 Action alone is written in the book of fate,  
 What we sow that alone we take;  
 O Nanak, be saved or forever transmigrate.

21

Pilgrimage, austerity, mercy, almsgiving and  
 charity  
 Bring merit, be it as little as the mustard  
 seed;  
 But he who hears, believes and cherishes  
 the Word,  
 An inner pilgrimage and cleansing is his  
 need.  
 All virtue is Thine, for I have none,  
 Worthless is prayer without good acts done.  
 Blessed art Thou the Creator, the prayer,  
 the primal  
 Truth and beauty and longing eternal.  
 What was the time, what day of the week,  
 What the month, what season of the year,  
 When Thou didst create the earthly sphere?  
 The Pandit knows it not, nor is it writ in  
 his *Puran*;  
 The Qazi knows it not, though he read and  
 copied the *Koran*.  
 The Yogi knows not the date nor the day  
 of the week,  
 He knows not the month or even the season.

Only Thou who made it all can speak,  
 For knowledge is Thine alone.  
 How then shall I know Thee, how  
 describe, praise and name?  
 O Nanak, many there be who pretend to  
 know, each bolder in his claim.  
 All I say is : 'Great is the Lord, great His  
 name;  
 What He ordains comes to be',  
 O Nanak, he who sayeth more shall  
 hereafter regret his stupidity.

22

Numerous worlds there be in regions  
 beyond the skies and below,  
 Research-weary scholars have delved but  
 do not know.  
 He is boundless the Vedas proclaim  
 He is in eighteen hundred worlds the  
 Muslim texts say,  
 The Reality behind forms is one and the  
 same.  
 If it could be writ, it would have been,  
 but the writer thereof be none.  
 O Nanak, say but this, the Lord is great,  
 in His knowledge He is alone.

23

Worshippers who praise the Lord know  
 not His greatness,  
 As rivers and rivulets that flow into the  
 sea know not its vastness.  
 Mighty kings with domains vaster than the  
 ocean  
 With wealth piled high in a mountainous  
 heap,  
 Are less than the little ant  
 That the Lord's Name in its heart doth  
 keep.

24

Infinite His goodness, and the ways of  
 exaltation;  
 Infinite His creation and His benefaction;  
 Infinite the sights and sounds, infinite

18





His great design,  
 Infinite its execution, infinite without  
 confine.  
 Many there be that cried in pain to seek  
 the end of all ending.  
 Their cries were all in vain, for the end  
 is past understanding.  
 It is the end of which no one knoweth,  
 The more one says the more it groweth.  
 The Lord is of great eminence, exalted  
 in His name.  
 He who would know His height must in  
 stature be the same.  
 He alone can His own greatness measure,  
 O Nanak, His grace is our bounty  
 His bounty is our treasure.

25

Of His bounty one cannot write too much,  
 He the Great Giver desires not even a  
 mustard seed;  
 Even the mighty beg at His door, and others  
 such  
 Whose numbers can never be conceived.  
 There be those who receive but are  
 self-indulgent,  
 Others who get but have no gratitude.  
 There be the foolish, whose bellies are  
 never filled,  
 Others, whom hunger's pain doth ever  
 torment,  
 All this comes to pass as Thou hast willed.  
 Thy will alone breaks mortal bonds,  
 No one else hath influence.  
 The fool who argues otherwise  
 Shall be smitten into silence.  
 The Lord knows our needs, and gives,  
 Few there be that count their blessings,  
 He who is granted gratitude and power  
 to praise,  
 O Nanak, is the king of kings.

26

His goodness cannot be priced or traded,  
 Nor His worshippers valued, nor their store;

Priceless too are dealers in the market sacred  
 With love and peace evermore.  
 Perfect His law and administration,  
 Precise His weights and measures;  
 Boundless His bounty and His omens,  
 Infinite mercy in His orders.  
 How priceless Thou art one cannot state,  
 Those who spoke are mute in adoration,  
 The readers of the scriptures expatiate,  
 Having read, are lost in learned  
 conversation.  
 The great gods Brahma and Indra do  
 Thee proclaim  
 So do Krishna and his maidens fair;  
 Siva and the Saivites do Thee name.  
 The Buddhas Thou made, Thy name bear.  
 The demons and the demi-gods,  
 Men, brave men, seers, and the sainted,  
 Having discoursed and discussed  
 Have spoken and departed.  
 If Thou didst many more create  
 Not one could any more state,  
 For Thou art as great as is Thy pleasure.  
 O Nanak, Thou alone knowest Thy measure.  
 He who claims to know blasphemeth  
 And is the worst among the stupidest.

27

SODAR

(Te Deum)

Where is the gate, where the mansion,  
 From whence Thou watchest all creation,  
 Where sounds of musical melodies,  
 Of instruments playing, minstrels singing,  
 Are fused in divine harmony?  
 Where the breezes blow, the waters run  
 and the fires burn  
 There Dharamraj, the king of death, sits  
 in state;  
 There the recording angels Chitra and  
 Gupta write  
 For Dharamraj to read and adjudicate,  
 There are the gods Ishwara and Brahma,  
 The goddess Devi of divine grace;

19



There Indra sits on his celestial throne  
 And lesser gods, each in his place.  
 There ascetics in deep meditation,  
 Holy men in contemplation,  
 The pure of heart, the continent,  
 Men of peace and contentment,  
 Doughty warriors never yielding,  
 Thy praises are ever singing.  
 From age to age, the pandit and the sage  
 Do Thee exalt in their studies and their  
 writing.  
 There maidens fair, heart-bewitching,  
 Who inhabit the earth, the upper and the  
 lower regions,  
 Thy praises chant in their singing.  
 By the gems that Thou didst create,  
 In the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage,  
 Is Thy name exalted.  
 By warriors strong and valiant in strife,  
 By the sources four from whence came life,  
 Of egg or womb, of sweat or seed,  
 Is Thy name magnified.  
 The regions of the earth, the heavens and  
 the universe  
 That Thou didst make and dost sustain,  
 Sing to Thee and praise Thy name.  
 Only those Thou lovest and with whom  
 Thou art pleased  
 Can give Thee praise and in Thy love be  
 steeped.  
 Others too there must be who Thee acclaim,  
 I have no memory of knowing them  
 Nor of knowledge, O Nanak, make a claim.  
 He alone is the master true, Lord of the  
 Word, ever the same  
 He who made creation is, shall be and  
 shall ever remain;  
 He who made things of diverse species,  
 shapes and hues,  
 Beholds that His handiwork His greatness  
 proves.  
 What He wills He ordains,  
 To Him no one can an order give,  
 For He, O Nanak, is the king of kings,

As He wills so we must live.

28

As a beggar goes a-begging,  
 Bowl in one hand, staff in the other,  
 Rings in his ears, in ashes smothered,  
 So go thou forth in life.  
 With earrings made of contentment,  
 With modesty for thy begging bowl,  
 Meditation the fabric of thy garment,  
 Knowledge of death thy cowl.  
 Let thy mind be chaste, virginal clean,  
 Faith the staff on which to lean.  
 Thou shalt then thy fancy humiliate  
 With mind subdued, the world subjugate.  
 Hail! and to Thee be salutation  
 Thou art primal, Thou art pure,  
 Without beginning, without termination,  
 In single form forever endure.

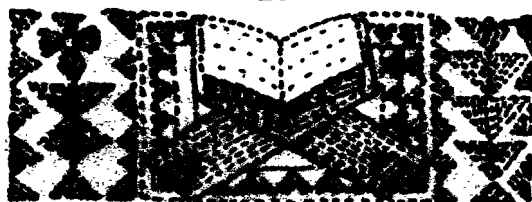
29

From the storehouse of compassion  
 Seek knowledge for thy food.  
 Let thy heartbeat be the call of the  
 conch-shell  
 Blown in gratitude.  
 He is the Lord, His is the will, His the  
 creation,  
 In secret magic formulas lie, is no hope  
 He is the master of destiny, of union and  
 separation.  
 Hail! and to Thee be salutation.  
 Thou art primal, Thou art pure,  
 Without beginning, without termination,  
 In single form forever endure.

30

Maya, mythical goddess in wedlock divine,  
 Bore three gods accepted by all,  
 The Creator of the world, the one who  
 preserves,  
 And the one who adjudges its fall.  
 But it is God alone whose will prevails,  
 Others but their obedience render.  
 He sees and directs, but is by them unseen.

20





That of all is the greatest wonder.  
 Haill and to Thee be salutation.  
 Thou art primal, Thou art pure,  
 Without beginning, without termination,  
 In single form forever endure.

31

He hath His prayer-mat in every region,  
 In every realm His store.  
 To human beings He doth apportion  
 Their share for once and evermore.  
 The Maker having made doth His own  
 creation view.  
 O Nanak, He made truth itself, for He  
 Himself is true.  
 Haill and to Thee be salutation,  
 Thou art primal, Thou art pure,  
 Without beginning, without termination,  
 In single form forever endure.

32

Were I given a hundred thousand tongues  
 instead of one,  
 And the hundred thousand multiplied  
 twentyfold,  
 A hundred thousand times would I say, and  
 say again,  
 The Lord of all the worlds is one.  
 That is the path that leads,  
 These the steps that mount,  
 Ascend thus to the Lord's mansion  
 And with Him be joined in unison.  
 The sound of the songs of heaven thrills  
 The like of us who crawl but desire to fly.  
 O Nanak, His grace alone it is that fulfils,  
 The rest is mere prattle, and a lie.

33

Ye have no power to speak or in silence listen,  
 To grant or give away,  
 Ye have no power to live or die,  
 Ye have no power to acquire wealth and  
 dominion,  
 To compel the mind to thought or reason,  
 To escape the world and fly.

He who hath the pride of power, let him try and  
 see.

O Nanak, before the Lord there is no low or  
 high degree.

34

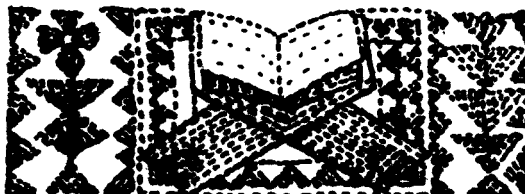
He who made the night and day,  
 The days of the week and the seasons,  
 He who made the breezes blow, the waters flow  
 The fires and the lower regions,  
 Made the earth—the temple of law.

He who made creatures of diverse kinds  
 With a multitude of names,  
 Made this the law—  
 By thought and deed be judged forsooth,  
 For God is true and dispenseth truth.  
 There the elect His court adorn,  
 And God Himself their actions honours;  
 There are sorted deeds that were done and  
 bore fruit  
 From those that to action could never ripen.  
 This, O Nanak, shall hereafter happen.

35

In the realm of justice there is law;  
 In the realm of knowledge there is reason.  
 Wherefore are the breezes, the waters and fire  
 Gods that preserve and destroy, Krishnas  
 and Shivas?  
 Wherefore are created forms, colours, attire,  
 Gods that create, the many Brahmas?  
 Here one strives to comprehend,  
 The golden mount of knowledge ascend,  
 And learn as did the child-sage Dhruva.  
 Wherefore are the thunders and lightning,  
 The moons and suns,  
 The world and its regions?  
 Wherefore are the sages, seers, wise men,  
 Goddesses, false prophets, demons and  
 demi-gods,  
 Wherefore are there jewels in the ocean?  
 How many forms of life there be,  
 How many forms of speech,  
 How many kings of proud ancestry?

22



Of these things many strive to know,  
Many the slaves of reason,  
Many there are, O Nanak, their numbers are  
legion.

36

As in the realm of knowledge wisdom is  
triumphant  
And yields a myriad joys,  
So in the realm of spiritual endeavour is  
beauty resplendent.  
There are fashioned forms of great  
loveliness,  
Of them it is better to remain silent  
Than hazard guesses and then repent.  
There too are fashioned consciousness,  
understanding, mind and reason  
The genius of the sage and seer, the power  
of humans superhuman.

37

In the realm of action, effort is supreme,  
Nothing else prevails.  
There dwell doughty warriors brave and  
strong,  
With hearts full of the spirit of God  
And celestial maidens of great beauty  
Who sing His praises.  
They cannot die nor be beguiled,  
For God Himself in their hearts resides.  
There too are congregations of holy men  
Who rejoice for the Lord in their midst  
presides.  
In the realm of truth is the Formless One  
Who, having created, watches His creation  
And graces us with the blessed vision.  
There are the lands, the earths and the  
spheres  
To whose description there is no limit;  
There by a myriad forms are a myriad  
purposes fulfilled,  
What He ordains is in them instilled.

What He beholds, thinks and does  
contemplate,  
O Nanak, is too hard to state.

38

If thou must cast a gold coin true  
Let thy mint these rules pursue.  
In the forge of continence  
Let the goldsmith be a man of patience,  
His hammer be made of knowledge,  
His anvil made of understanding;  
With the fear of God the bellows blow,  
With prayer and austerity make the fire  
aglow.  
Pour the nectar into the mould of love,  
Print the name of the Lord thereon,  
And cool it in the holy waters.  
For thus in the mint of truth the Word is  
coined,  
Thus those who are graced are to work  
enjoined,  
O Nanak, by His blessing have joy  
everlasting.

#### SHLOKA

Air, water and earth,  
Of these are we made.  
Air like the guru's word gives the breath of life.  
To the babe born to the great mother earth  
Sired by the waters.  
The day and night our nurses be  
That watch over us in our infancy.  
In their laps we play.  
The world is our playground.  
Our acts right and wrong at Thy court shall  
come to judgment,  
Some be seated near Thy seat, some ever  
kept distant.  
The toils have ended of those that have  
worshipped Thee,  
O Nanak, their faces are lit with joyful  
radiance— many others they set free.

23





# Hymns from Sri Raga

*Moti ta mandir usraih ratani ta hoe jadao*  
(Sri Raga)

Were I to live in a palace built of walls  
Studded with pearls and rubies,  
Fragrant with odours of musk and saffron  
Smeared with agar and sandal  
Lord, let not mine eyes be deceived by these  
That I fail to recall Thy Name.

Without the Lord my soul would be burnt to  
cinders.

I asked my guru and now I know  
There is no sanctuary but the Lord.

Were my floor embedded with diamonds  
and rubies,

On the floor a couch likewise with rubies  
inlaid

And on the couch a jewel-bedecked damsel  
Sportive and wanton.

Lord, let not mine eyes be deceived by these  
That I fail to recall Thy Name.

Were I endowed with powers to perform  
miracles,

To attract people by the gift of making gold;  
Were I able to vanish and reappear at will  
Thus strike awe in the hearts of the  
populace.

Lord, let not mine eyes be deceived by these  
That I fail to recall Thy Name.

Were I a Sultan attended by retainers  
With armies under my command and  
My foot planted firmly upon my throne;

Were my word law, all revenues mine;  
O Nanak, all this would be like thin air.  
Lord, let not mine eyes be deceived by these  
That I fail to recall Thy Name.

*Kot kotee meri arja pavan peean apiao*  
(Sri Raga)

Were I to live a million years in a cavern  
Pierced neither by the sun nor the moon;  
Too small to let me stretch myself,  
Too small to sleep and dream;  
Were my food and drink the air I breathed  
(And I tried to assess Thy worth)  
I would not know how great Thou art,  
How then can I praise Thee?

He is the Truth, He is without form.  
He is self-existent, His status is unique.  
We hear of Him, then we speak of Him.  
If He wills we have to know Him.  
Were I to be slashed to shreds  
Minced and ground to pulp  
Fired in a furnace, with ashes mingled,  
I would not know how great Thou art.

Were I a bird soaring through a hundred  
skies  
Beyond the range of vision  
Feeding on nothing, drinking nothing,  
I would not know how great Thou art,  
How then can I praise Thee?

O Nanak, had I a hundred thousand tons of  
paper



And filled the pages with essence of learning  
 Pen plying with the speed of wind, dipping  
 in an inexhaustible inkwell,  
 Even so  
 I would not know how great Thou art,  
 How then can I praise Thee?

*Lekhai bolan bolana lekhai khana khao*  
 (Sri Raga)

There is a limit to the amount we talk  
 And to the food we eat;  
 There is a limit to our wanderings  
 To the sights we see, to the sounds we hear;  
 There is a limit to the number of breaths a  
 man breathes  
 We do not have to ask learned men about  
 truths like these.

Brother, *Maya* hath spread its deception  
 everywhere;  
 Those it blinds forget His Name.  
 For them there is no peace in this life  
 And in life hereafter it will be the same.

Once born, man has to live to the end of his  
 days,  
 To sustain himself for that span of time.  
 Man goes alone to the place of reckoning  
 when he dies  
 The wailings of those he leaves behind are  
 but meaningless cries.

Everyone says the Lord is great,  
 None will be outdone in praising Him;  
 Yet no one has discovered His real worth.  
 His stature increased by praise.  
 The worlds are packed with a multitude of  
 people  
 But Thou alone art our Lord and Master,  
 Thou alone art the Truth.

Of the low castes mine is the lowest,  
 I am the meanest of the mean.  
 O Nanak, amongst the poor seek thy friends  
 and companions

Emulate not the mighty.  
 Where the fallen have protected been  
 There is Thy grace and mercy seen.

*Jal moh ghas mas kar mat kagad kar sar*  
 (Sri Raga)

Burn away attachment to things of the world  
 Crush its soot to make ink;  
 Use your understanding as if it were a sheet  
 of paper,  
 With the pen of love  
 Your mind the scribe  
 And the guru to guide you  
 Write down your thoughts.

Write the Name of the Lord  
 Write praises of the Lord  
 Write that He is without end and without  
 limit.

Brother, if you learn to write all these things  
 Yours will be the password at the place of  
 reckoning.

You will be acclaimed with honour.  
 A joyous welcome you will receive,  
 On your forehead will be the mark of  
 approval  
 If in the Name of the True One you truly  
 believe.

This is the gift of grace  
 Idle prattle is all else.

One comes, another goes;  
 Some style themselves as sardars  
 Others are destined to beg  
 Yet others hold grand *darbars*.  
 Man will know this truth when he dies  
 That without the Name nothing avails  
 (Without the Name all else is lies).

Thy might strikes terror in my heart,  
 My body wastes away in fear of Thee.  
 Proud, titled Khans and Sultans have I seen  
 Reduced to dust.



O Nanak, many have I seen pack up and go  
I have seen the bonds of false love cut  
asunder.

*Avaah bhainey gal milauh ank  
saheladeeah*

(Sri Raga)

Come my sister  
Let us embrace!  
Come beloved friend  
Let us speak of love!  
Let us sit together  
And talk of our Husband  
Our perfect, powerful Lord.  
Lord, Thou art the Truth,  
Thou, the repository of goodness,  
We the repositories of evil,  
Thou art the Creator  
And all is within Thy power.  
By Thy One Name we abide  
When Thou art there  
Why need we think of anyone beside?  
Go ask the happy spouse,  
'What virtues earned you favour of the Lord?'  
(She will tell thee)  
'It's the gentle path of *sahaj*, calmness of  
manner and sweetness of tongue.'  
If you hearken unto the guru's word  
You will meet your Husband, the Lord of  
Love.

Manifold is Thy nature, Great is Thy bounty  
Manifold Thy creatures who praise Thee  
day and night.  
Manifold Thy shapes and colours  
Manifold Thy races and castes.

On meeting the true guru  
One gains knowledge of the truth  
Then one merges into the Truthful One.  
From the guru's teaching we learn the fear  
of the Lord.  
From comprehension of the truth we gain  
honour.

O Nanak! Truth is the king of kings  
He taketh us and uniteth us with Him.

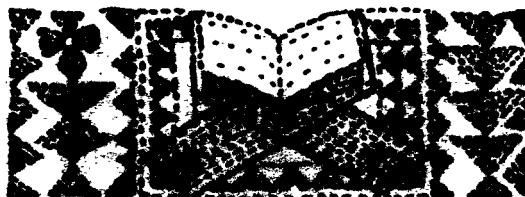
*Dhat milai phun dhat kau sifi sifat samai*  
(Sri Raga)

As pieces of metal of the same kind melt  
into one another,  
So a worshipper merges his personality in the  
object of his worship.  
Like the dark red of the poppy flower  
Is he dyed in the fast colours of truth.  
He who in repose and single-minded  
meditation  
Prays to the Truthful One  
Becomes one with the Lord.

O brother! be as the dust under the feet of  
saints.  
In the company of the saintly you'll find  
Your guru and the gift of salvation,  
You will get *Kamadhenu*, the celestial cow,  
The giver of all things desired.  
High in the heavens  
In setting paradisaal  
Stands the mansion of the Lord.  
A truthful life and good deeds done  
Earn us the right to human birth;  
By love we find our way  
To the gate of the Lord's mansion.  
The saintly train their minds to ponder  
On the all-pervading soul in meditation.

If we live by the threefold fruits of *Karma*  
(the good, the neutral and the bad)  
We shall be victims of hopes and anxieties.  
How can one escape the stranglehold of this  
triple noose?  
How find the gentle path of *sahaj* and peace  
Save by guidance of the guru?

(Under the guidance of the guru)  
We know that in our own home  
Stands the mansion of the Lord.  
We can invoke His grace  
And be cleansed of our sins.







Without the guru's help we cannot wash off  
the dirt of the world,  
Without the Lord's grace how can we our  
haven find?

Abandon hope in other things  
On the Divine Word fix your mind.

Sacrificed to that guru may Nanak's life be  
Who having himself seen the Lord  
Shows others how to see.

*Tan jal bal nati bhaia, man maya moh  
manoor*

(Sri Raga)

My body is burnt to ashes and mingled with  
dust

My mind is rusted with attachment to  
worldly things;

Once again my sins pursue me  
And falsehood trumpets its victory.

Without the Word we are caught in the  
wheel

(Of birth, death and rebirth).

Thus hath double-minded duality  
Been the undoing of multitudes.

My soul, fix thy mind on the Word Divine  
The Word will take thee across the waters of  
life.

Those who the guru's teaching do not know  
Will die and be reborn, go and come, come  
and go.

A person is pure

If he enshrines the True Name within him.

His body is imbued with the fear of the True  
One

And his tongue loves the taste of truth.

He, by God's grace, is in a state of ecstasy

His body is of passions free.

The True One made the air,

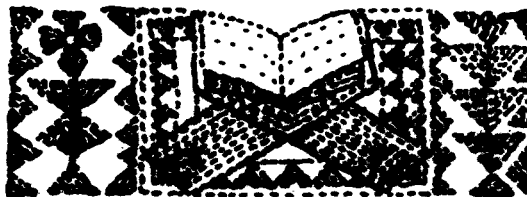
From air came water

From the waters He made the three regions

In every heart He lit His lamp.

The Lord is Pure, He cannot be defiled.

He who is dyed in the colours of the Lord



Will be honoured (and remain unsullied).

The mind is the true abode of peace  
Therein comes the grace of the Lord  
The five elements of his body  
Are tempered in the fear of the True One  
The light of Truth illumines his mind.  
O Nanak! his sins are forgiven  
And the guru preserves his honour.

*Nanak bedi sach ki bhareeai gur veechar*  
(Sri Raga)

Sayeth Nanak: Launch the boat of truth with  
thoughts of the guru.  
One comes into the world, another goes  
Everyone full of self-esteem.  
A closed and stubborn mind will sink thy  
vessel,  
But truth of the guru's teaching will take it  
across.

Without the guru to guide me  
How can I cross over to the other shore?  
How can I reach the haven of peace?  
Lord, preserve me if so Thy pleasure be  
I have no other Protector save Thee.

Facing me I see a forest on fire  
Behind me I see new life in green.  
(And I know thereby that) life begins as it  
ends  
(From God it's born, into God it blends).  
Let Truth in every heart be instilled.

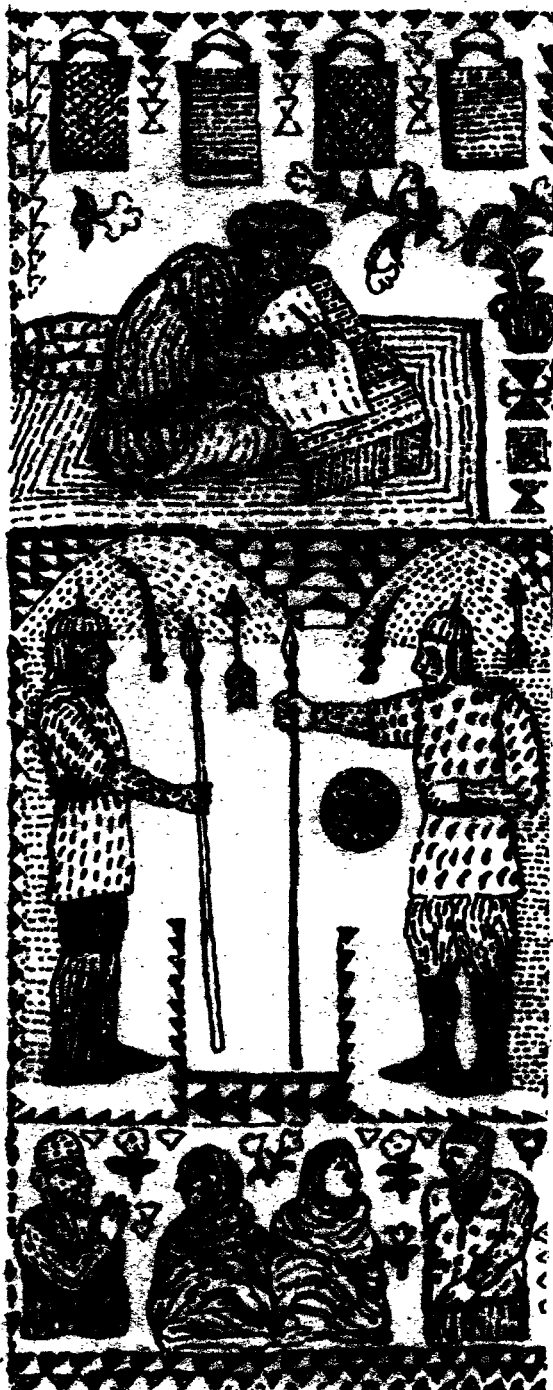
He is the Uniter, He makes the union  
He takes us to His mansion.  
Let every breath I take breathe Thy Name  
Lord, let me never forget Thee.

The more my Master possesses my mind  
The more I imbibe the nectar of my guru's  
message.

Lord, to Thee I surrender my body and my  
mind  
Thou art my Master.







Lord, destroy Thou my self-esteem  
And let me mingled be in Thee.

He who created this world  
Created also the three regions.  
Men of God see the Divine Light  
They that turn their backs on God  
Stumble in darkness.

In every heart shines the Light Eternal  
Through the guru's guidance can it be  
discerned.

Praise be to the saintly who know God  
They are blended with the True One  
Their true worth shines forth.

O Nanak! His Name doth such peace bring  
For the body and soul are in His keeping.

*Ik til pyara veesrai rog vadda man mah*  
(Sri Raga)

If I forget the Beloved even for a trice  
A serious sickness afflicts my soul.  
If Hari dwell not within my mind  
In His court no place of honour will I find.

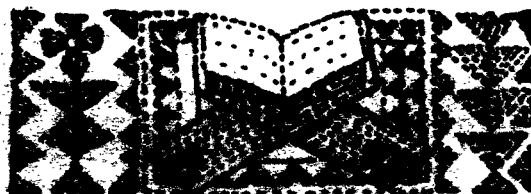
On meeting the guru we find peace  
Hunger's fire is doused by the waters of  
virtue.

O heart! day and night sing praises of God.  
Rare in the world are people  
Who forget not the Name for even a  
moment.

Blend your light with the Light Eternal  
Mingle your consciousness with His—and see  
Violence, selfhood, wanderings of the mind  
Anxiety and sorrow will cease to be.  
By the grace of the guru meet the saintly  
In whose hearts dwells Hari the Lord.

If I offer my body as if it were a bride  
The Lord will take it as if He were the  
groom.

Love not a mortal who you know  
Is here for a while as in a passing show.



The saintly blend with the Lord  
The virtuous share His couch and become  
one with Him.

With the sacred water given by the guru  
Quench the four fires (of cruelty and anger,  
of greed and love of worldly things).  
The lotus which is within thee will blossom  
And thy heart will fill with ambrosia.  
O Nanak! make the true guru thy friend  
He will take thee to the court of the True  
One.

*Hari Hari japaoh pyariah gurmat ley Hari  
bol*

(Sri Raga)

Beloved friend, on thy lips ever be the Name  
of God!

Heed the advice of the guru and call on Hari!  
Test thy mind with the touchstone of truth  
See that it is of perfect weight,  
The mind is a priceless gem  
No one has valued it.

O Brother! the gem that is Hari  
Is in possession of the guru.  
By associating with men of God thou wilt  
find the true guru.  
And day and night thou wilt sing songs of  
praise.

In the light of the guru's teaching  
Truthful be thy trade  
Truthful too thy earnings.

As fire is put out by water  
So will desire be subdued  
And become the slave of thy slave.  
The demon of death will not pursue thee  
Thou wilt swim across the fearful ocean of  
life.

Men of God like not falsehood  
Being themselves true, they love the truthful.  
Those who worship mammon, love not the  
truth

Falsehood's mansion is raised on a false  
foundation.

Those imbued with truth, meet the guru  
The truthful blend with the Truthful One.

In our minds is embedded the gem, the  
ruby of the Name,  
It is a nugget, a diamond beyond all price.  
Truth be our investment and our  
merchandise

The Name of the Lord the treasure we earn.  
In the depth of every heart dwells the Lord  
O Nanak! the saintly guru and guide we  
find

If the priceless gem that is Hari be kind.

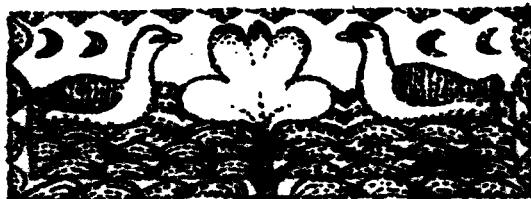
*Bharmai bhah na vijhvai je bhavē disantar  
des*

(Sri Raga)

The fire of pride is not extinguished  
By wandering over distant lands.  
The dirt of the mind is not cleansed  
By wearing clean garments.  
Fie, the life of falsehood! Fie, the mask of  
divinity!

Nothing will make thee a *Bhakta* true  
Save the teaching of the true guru.  
O mind! if thou seekest good and annihilate  
pride  
Let the guru's word find a place in thine  
heart  
And the craving of the ego will be  
destroyed.

The mind is a priceless pearl  
With it thou canst acquire an honoured  
place beside the Master.  
In the company of the pious seek the Lord  
For the Lord loves those on whose lips is  
His Name.  
Thy pride shall vanish, and thine be the  
bliss  
Of a wave mingling back into the waters.





Those that have not brought the thought of  
Hari to their minds  
Shall be caught in the cycle of birth and  
death.

Those that come not to the True One, the  
Supreme Being,  
Shall be ruined and like flotsam drift  
On the turbulent waters of life  
Human life which is priceless beyond  
compare  
Will thus be bartered away for a worthless  
shell.

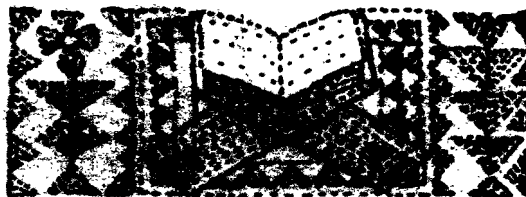
Those to whom the true guru tells the  
secret,  
Acquire complete wisdom.  
The guru takes them across the waters  
And they are received with honour.  
O Nanak! their faces are radiant  
And in their hearts is joy,  
Born of the music of His Word.

*Dhan joban ar phulda natheedai din char*  
(Sri Raga)

Wealth, youth and flowers  
Are short-lived—as guests for four brief  
days.  
As leaves of a water-hyacinth taken out of  
water wither  
So wither they.

Dear friend! make merry while the sap of  
youth courses in your veins  
Your days shorten and weariness will  
overtake your ageing body.

My friend once so gay  
Has gone to sleep in his grave;  
A wretched outcaste that I am,  
I too will follow him  
Wailing in my feeble voice.  
My soul! my fair one! didst thou not hear  
With thine own ear  
Not forever is the bliss of the parental home?



For thy groom (death) awaits thee there?

O Nanak! in her father's home she slept  
So carefree as if the night were endless;  
In broad daylight was she robbed  
Her dowry of goodness was thus lost  
And her sack filled with sin.

*Tu daryao dana bina mai machali kaisey ant  
lahah*

(Sri Raga)

Lord, Thou art the mighty river,  
Thou knowest and seest all things.  
How can I, a poor fish know  
Thy depth and Thy expanse?

Whichever way I turn,  
There art Thou and no other.  
Taken away from Thine waters,  
I suffocate and die.

I know not the fisherman  
I see not his net.  
But when I am caught in it  
In my black agony  
It is to Thee I turn

Lord, Thou who art present everywhere,  
In my folly I believed Thou wert far from  
me.

Whatever I do is known to Thee  
When Thou seest all  
How can I deny my deeds?

I am not worthy to serve Thee,  
I cannot glorify Thy Name.  
Whatever Thou givest  
That will I eat;  
I beg at no other door but Thine.  
Nanak hath but one petition  
Let his body and soul be in Thine keeping.

He is near, He is far.  
He is midway between the two;  
All that He has created in the world  
He watches and He hears.





O Nanak! what He wills  
Comes to pass.

*Achal chalai na chalai*

(Sri Raga)

He deprives of delusion  
The things that delude;  
He blunts the edge of the dagger  
And it does not wound.  
Man's mind wavers for it is full of craving;  
He is safe only in the Lord's keeping.

How then light the lamp when there is no  
oil?

Let your body be the lamp,  
From the holy books take wisdom  
And use it as oil.  
Let knowledge of His presence be the wick  
And with the tinder of truth  
Strike the spark.  
Thus light you the oil-lamp  
And in its light meet your Lord.

When the recording Angel claims your body  
And catalogues your deeds,  
Your good acts will save you from the cycle  
of birth and death.

If in life you have served others  
Your reward shall be a place in His court.  
Says Nanak: You will raise your arms in joy.

*Akh akh man vavana jeo jeo japai vai*  
(Sri Raga Ashtapadi)

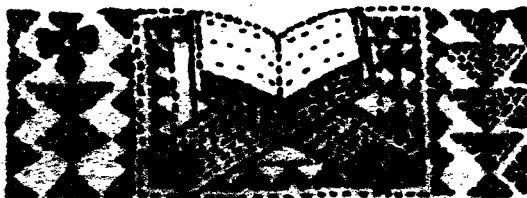
Let your heart sing of God with every breath  
you draw;

How great is He whom we serenade? where  
does He live?

All those that sang Thy praise are now in  
deep meditation.

Brother! Allah is beyond our reach and  
beyond limit

Pure is His Name; pure His abode, He is in  
truth our Preserver.



How great is Thy dominion cannot be  
known; no one knows how to write of it:  
A hundred bards singing in chorus could not  
describe a fraction of Thy greatness.  
Nobody hath found Thy worth; everyone  
repeats what he has heard another say.

Saints, prophets, guides (who show the way  
to God),  
Men of faith, men of God and martyrs  
Preachers, seekers and law-givers  
Guardians of mosques and the Darvesh who  
are welcomed at God's gate,  
Gain greater blessing.  
Their lives are like the additional prayer  
when worship is over.

He asks no one when He builds; He asks no  
one when He destroys;  
He asks no one when He gives or takes.  
He knows His own creation; He acts and  
causes others to act.  
He extends His grace to everyone; and  
favours those who please Him.  
We know not His dwelling; we know not  
His Name.  
We know not how great His Name is among  
other names.

How great is the place where lives my Lord,  
the king of kings?  
None can reach it; of whom shall I ask the  
way?  
When God raises one caste above others,  
Those not raised do not like it.  
Greatness is in the hands of the Great One;  
He gifts to whom He pleases.

He sees that His rule obtains everywhere; He  
brooks no delay.  
Everyone cries for more hoping thereby to  
increase his share.  
How great is Thy bounty, Thou giver of  
countless gifts!  
Nanak, from age to age, never does His  
storehouse diminish.

*Sabhe kant maheliya saglia karah seegar*  
(Sri Raga Ashtapadi)

We are His wives; we adorn ourselves for Him.  
We dress ourselves in bright red to gain His  
attention  
But love is not won by bargaining; a counterfeit  
coin gilded with gold is soon found out and  
spells ruin.

How does a woman win the attention of the  
Lord?

Lord, she who is pleasing to Thy sight is in  
nuptial bliss; Thy mercy is her adornment.

The guru's word is her adornment; her body  
and soul are with her Lord.

With hands clasped she waits on Him; her  
prayer comes from the truthfulness of her  
heart.

She is immersed in His love, she lives  
in fear of the True One;

And when dyed with His love, her colour is  
fast and true.

She is counted among the followers of the  
Beloved.

She is recognized as one of His hand-maidens.  
Her love is not sundered; the True One unites  
her with Himself.

Her soul is plaited with the Word  
I am ever a sacrifice unto her.

She who is absorbed in the true guru becomes  
immortal, never shall she become a widow.  
Her Beloved is forever handsome and renews  
His youth; He does not die nor depart.  
He ever enjoys His fulfilled wife; His  
gracious eyes rest on her ever-obedient  
person.

Truth is in the plaits of her hair, love in  
her dress and ornaments,  
God within her is like the breath of sandal  
perfume, her chamber has the tenth gate  
(through which the Lord enters).

She lights the lamp of the Word, she wears  
God's name as her necklace.



She is beautiful amongst women of beauty;  
on her forehead she wears the jewel of love.  
Her beauty and wisdom are bewitching, her  
love is true and infinite.

She knows no man besides her Beloved; it is  
only for the true guru that she has love  
and affection.

Why did you waste the dark night in sleep?  
How will you pass the hours without your  
Lord?

Woman, your bosom shall be afire, your body  
burn, and your mind be aflame.

A woman not taken by her Husband wastes  
away her youth.

Her Husband is on her couch; but she sleeps  
and knows not of His presence.

I sleep while my Beloved is awake; to whom  
shall I turn for advice?

Sayeth Nanak, the true guru teaches how to  
fear and love God

And thus be united with Him.

*Macchli jal na janian sar khara asgah*

(Sri Raga)

A fish in the deep and salty sea.

Very wise and pretty was she,

How was it then that she was taken unawares

And knew not of the net?

She suffered for her acts

None can escape the noose of death.

Brothers, know that the angel of death  
hovers above you.

As on the fish so on us men

When we least expect it

Will fall the net.

The entire world is within death's compass  
Without the guru there is no means of  
combating it.

By truth gain release

Through truth dispel doubt and duality

My life be a sacrifice to the truthful

Who have reached the gate of the True One.

As a small bird in the talons of a hawk,  
Or on the ground caught in the huntsman's  
snare

So is man in the thrall of death.

Only those the guru protects are saved.

If ye have not the Name

You will be picked out and destroyed

You will have no friends or companions to  
help you.

He is True,

His realm is Truth.

Those who have faith in Him

Are pure of heart.

Those who have gained this knowledge from  
the guru

Are true and speak the truth.

Thus do I pray to the true guru:

'Take me to the Lord and unite me with Him,'

On being united, I will gain peace,

The demon of death will poison himself  
and die,

'Let me abide by the Name

And let the Name abide in me.'

Without the guru we stumble in the dark,  
Without the Word there is no understanding,

The guru's teaching illumines the mind

And attaches it to the truth

Then hath death no dominion

Our light blends with the Light Eternal.

Thou art our Companion, Thou art wise,

Thou art Thyself the Uniter.

Through the teaching of the guru

We exalt Thee who hast no end nor limit.

Where there is the immortal Word of the guru

Death shall have no dominion.

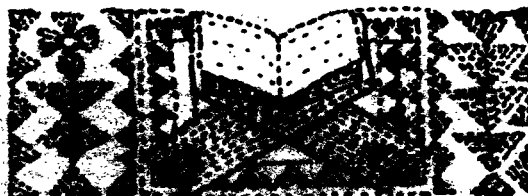
By His ordinances comes all creation into  
being,

By His ordinances all labour and earn.

Under His ordinance is death,

By His ordinance we mingle with Truth.

O Nanak! whatever pleases Him comes to  
pass







We mortals by ourselves can do nothing.

*Jap tap sanjam sadheesai teerath keechai*  
vas

(Sri Raga)

Prayer, austerity, control over the senses  
Pilgrimages to holy places,  
Giving of alms, charity and all other good  
deeds,  
What matter they unless they gain merit  
With the Lord who is Truth?

As you sow, so shall you reap  
Life without virtue is life without hope.

Young woman understand  
If thou becomest the hand-maiden of good  
deeds

Thou shalt attain peace and joy.  
Abandon evil ways, merge with the Lord  
And find fulfilment in the teaching of the guru.

Without goods to sell, a trader sits idly  
staring in all directions  
He knows not how to start, his merchandise  
earns no profit.

Without anything to trade in, he suffers heavy  
losses.

Thus one who trades in falsehood suffers  
And is afflicted with sorrow.

If he looks within himself  
And examines the gem in his heart  
He will earn much profit.

Days and nights will bring increase in his  
income

He will take home his earnings  
And thus depart with his affairs settled.

Tradesman, let thy trade be under the  
guidance of saints,

Meditate upon the Creator.

If it please God the Uniter

You will meet men of God.

He in whom is lit the light Eternal

Will never thereafter suffer separation.

Truth will be his prayer-mat  
Truthful his life,  
True his love and adoration.

Those who recognize their real selves  
Their hearts become the abode of God.  
They take on the hues of the True One  
The True One becomes their gain.

In the three regions, He alone is the  
Supreme Lord,  
He is the Truth, His Name is Truth.

A wife who knows the company of her  
Husband

Who is sent for by Him to His mansion  
And with whom He disports Himself  
Is in veritable bliss.

Call her happy, call her true  
She hath won her Lord's heart by her virtue.

I stumble in the desert wastes  
From deserts I clamber up the hills;  
I lose myself in the forests.

Without the guru to guide me  
I shall not find my way.

If thus I wander everywhere  
I shall come and go from life to life.

Go, ask travellers who tread the path of  
servitude,

How to recognize our Sovereign Lord.

How to gain admission to his mansion

Without being questioned at the gates.

O Nanak! the One Lord reigns supreme  
everywhere

There is no second person, there is no other.

*Sun man bhooley bavrey gur ki charni*  
lag

(Sri Raga)

Thou simple, stupid soul

Hearken unto me!

Attach thyself to the feet of the guru

Pray to Hari, ponder over His Name.

The demon of death will be affeared of Thee



Sorrows will flee from thee.

A woman with dual loyalties suffers much;  
How can she remain happily married?  
Brother! I have no other sanctuary  
Save His Name; it is my only treasure.  
My guru gave it to me  
I am forever beholden to him.

Through the guru's teaching we attain honour  
To the guru be all praise for uniting me to Him.  
Without Him I would not live a single watch of  
the day,  
Without the name I would surely perish.  
Blind am I, let me not lose sight of the Name;  
Let my mind be steadfast when I leave for my  
last journey.

Those whose gurus are themselves blind  
Pointless is their pursuit (of Truth)  
Without guidance of the true guru  
We cannot find the Name.  
Without the Name life hath no purpose.  
It's birth and death and regret  
It is like the cawing of a crow in a deserted  
house.

Without the Name the body is like a hall of  
sorrows  
With its walls eaten up by dry rot;  
We cannot reach His abode  
Unless there is truth in our hearts.  
If we are imbued with the Name  
In our own homes we attain salvation.

I enquired of my guru,  
By his direction I earned my life's wages.  
Ego that fouled my soul,  
Ego that caused sorrow  
Was thus burnt out by the Word of God.  
By the gentle path of *sahaj* did I meet Him,  
Purified by truth I merged in the Truest of the  
True.

Those imbued with the Word are without stain,  
They lust no more,  
They conquer anger and pride;

They worship Thy name a hundred times and  
more  
And have Hari enshrined in their hearts.  
Why forget Him who sustains life?

He who dies with the divine Word on his lips  
Dies to death  
He need not die a second time.  
Only through the Word shall we find Him  
And learn the love of prayer.  
Without the Word, people wander in error  
They die only to be reborn, over and over  
again.  
Everyone praises himself  
From being great he becomes greatest of the  
great.  
Without the guru's help he knows not his real  
self,  
He only hears what others say about him.  
O Nanak! he who knows the Word  
Never thereafter talks of himself.

*Satgur poora je milai paeiai ratan  
beechar*

(Sri Raga)

If we find the true, the perfect guru  
Our thoughts become priceless as a ruby;  
If we present our minds to the guru  
We are rewarded with all-embracing love,  
We get the gift of salvation  
The Forgiver forgives us our sins.

O brother! know that without the guru there  
is no knowledge  
Go ask Brahma, Narad and Vyasa, ask anyone.  
The guru gives us knowledge and power to  
concentrate,  
The guru makes the incomprehensible  
capable of understanding.  
The guru is like the tree in full leaf  
casting a vast shade,  
The guru's treasury is full of rubies, gems and  
other precious stones.

In the guru's treasury is the Name unsullied





and pure love  
 (From it we can borrow)  
 Trade in truth  
 And earn profit beyond reckoning.  
 The true guru is the giver of joy  
 And the dispeller of sorrows.

He is the destroyer of the five demons of sin  
 (lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride).  
 The ocean of life is terrifying and difficult to  
 cross.

We can see neither the land behind us nor the  
 opposite shore,  
 Neither boat nor raft, neither an oar nor a  
 boatman.

Let the fear of the true guru be our boat.  
 By His grace He will take us across.  
 If for a trice you forget the Beloved Lord  
 Sorrow will afflict you, joy will depart.  
 Burn the wretched tongue which loves not  
 repeating the Name.

The body's earthen vessel cracks, it is wracked  
 with pain,  
 The demon of death grabs you, your regrets are  
 then in vain.

All our lives we cry; 'this is mine' and depart  
 crying, 'this too is mine'.

We discover that neither body, nor wealth,  
 nor wife was ours to take away.

There is no wealth except the Name;  
 (Without the Name) we are lost in the maze of  
*maya*

Serve the Master who is Truth  
 The guru will tell you of One who is beyond  
 telling.

On the wheel of birth, death and rebirth  
 Are our natures moulded  
 And the pattern of our lives determined.  
 What is writ cannot be erased by anyone,  
 For it is the dictate of the Lord.

Without the Name of Hari there is no escape  
 (From the cycle of birth, death and rebirth)  
 The teaching of the guru shows the way to  
 union divine.



I have no one save the Lord  
 My life and soul belong to Him.  
 I have burnt away my ego  
 I have burnt my greed and pride.  
 Sayeth Nanak, ponder over the Name  
 Divine  
 The treasure of virtues will all be thine.

*Re man Hari seo aisee preet kar jaisee  
 jal kamleh*

(Sri Raga)

My soul hearken unto me!  
 Love thy Lord as the lotus loves water  
 Buffeted by waves its affection does not  
 falter.

Creatures that have their being in water,  
 Taken out of water, die.

My soul! if thou hast not such love  
 How wilt thou obtain release?  
 If the Word of the guru is within us  
 We shall accumulate a store of devotion.

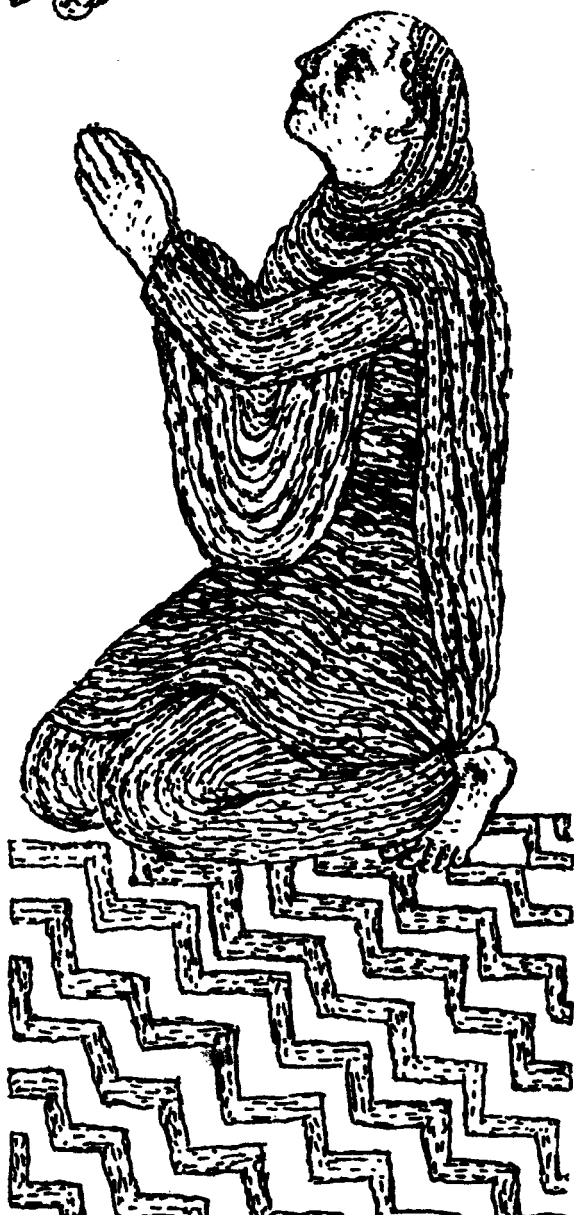
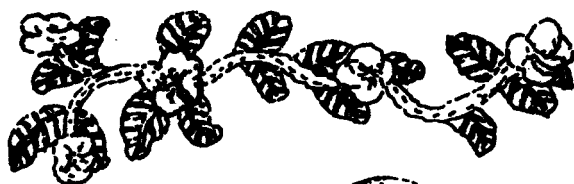
My soul hearken unto me!  
 Love thy Lord as a fish loves water.  
 The more the water, the greater its joy,  
 Greater the tranquillity of its body and mind.  
 Without water it cannot live one watch of the  
 day

Only God knows the anguish of its heart.

My soul hearken unto me!  
 Love thy Lord as the *Chatrik* loves the rain.  
 Although the lakes be full, the plains flooded  
 and green

It will not drink one drop.  
 By God's grace, its thirst will be slaked  
 But destiny may doom it to die.

My soul hearken unto me!  
 Love thy Lord as water loves milk.  
 It takes on the heat, boils and evaporates  
 before the milk can suffer.  
 He alone unites, He alone separates  
 He alone bestows true greatness.



41



My soul hearken unto me!  
 Love thy Lord as the *Chakvi* loves the sun  
 It sleeps not a wink for the distant sun it  
 deems close.  
 The perverse of mind know not that the godly  
 are ever in His presence.  
 The perverse of mind make many calculations  
 What the Creator does comes to pass.  
 Much as all desire to evaluate Him, He cannot  
 be evaluated.  
 Through the teaching of the guru can He be  
 found  
 And with the True One comes  
 tranquillity.

If the true guru presents it, true love will  
 not *sunder*  
 We are given the gift of knowledge and learn  
 the secret of the three worlds.  
 If we trade in goodness, we shall not forget  
 the Name that is pure.

Birds that fed on land and water have sported  
 and left their feeding ground.  
 We are here a watch or two on borrowed time;  
 our sport is also for the day and the morrow.  
 He whom Thou unitest with Thyself find their  
 true abode.

Without the guru, love cannot be born  
 The dross of the ego cannot be rinsed away.  
 He who recognizes the God within  
 Understands the secret of the Word and is  
 happy.

Disciples of the guru know their real selves,  
 No need have they for anyone's help.

Why speak of those who are already one with  
 God?  
 They have the Word and are fulfilled.  
 The perverse of mind do not comprehend,  
 They are separated from God and suffer.  
 O Nanak! there is but one gate to the  
 Lord's mansion  
 And there is no other sanctuary.

*Ram nam man bedhiya, avar ki kari  
 vichar*

(Sri Raga Ashtapadhi)

My heart is pierced by the Name of Rama!  
 what else shall I reflect upon?  
 Tranquil is the mind which meditates on  
 the Word,  
 Happy is the one who is imbued with God.  
 Preserve me as it pleases Thee,  
 Thy Name, O Hari, is my support.  
 My soul, the will of the Master is just.  
 Attach thyself to Him who made thy body  
 and mind and adorned it.

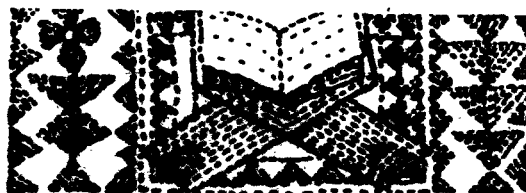
Were I to weigh my body, cut into tiny  
 pieces and burn in a sacrificial fire;  
 Were I to turn my body and soul into firewood,  
 burn it every day;  
 Were I to light hundreds of thousands of  
 sacrificial fires, they would not equal the  
 Name of Hari.

Were my head sawed in twain, my torso torn  
 in two;  
 Were my body frozen in Himalayan snows,  
 It would not rid my mind of disease.  
 No remedy equals the Name of Hari  
 This have I tested and found true.

Were I to give away castles of gold,  
 Strings of horses of good pedigree  
 And mighty elephants;  
 Were I to make gifts of land and of herds  
 of cows.

I would be aware of my goodness  
 And pride would remain in my heart.  
 The guru has given me the true gift;  
 My mind is pierced by the Name of Rama.

How many hard-headed thinkers are there?  
 How many interpretations of the *Vedas*?  
 In how many fetters is the soul bound?  
 The gate of salvation is only reached  
 through the guru's instruction.  
 Truth is above all; above truth is truthful  
 conduct.









Call everyone exalted; let no one appear to thee low.  
 The One God fashioned the vessels,  
 One source of light illumines the three worlds,  
 By His grace we find the truth; what He gives once none can take away.

When a good man meets a saint  
 He gains the guru's affection  
 And attains tranquillity.  
 If we are absorbed in the true guru, we can meditate in matters beyond the realm of speech.  
 He who drinks the nectar of the Name shall find fulfilment,  
 He shall go to God's court wearing robes of honour.

In the hearts of those who love the Word,  
 reverberate strains of the lute.  
 Few there are who hearken to the guru's words everyday and obtain understanding.  
 O Nanak! forget not the Name let the Word be thy wage and gain release.

*Chite disai dhaulhar bage bank duar*  
 (Sri Raga Ashtapadi)

Behold, gilded mansions with white ornamented gates!  
 Knowing they are perishable and delude us into love of worldly things  
 Our eyes rejoice at the sight.  
 Likewise the human body; it shall decay and be mingled with the dust.  
 If it hath love in it, nothing else will remain.  
 Listen brother! neither thy body nor thy wealth will accompany thee.  
 The Name of Rama is real wealth; God gives it through the guru.  
 If the Giver gives real wealth of the Name of Rama  
 He who is befriended by the guru and the Creator shall not be questioned in the world to come.

If God wills it, we shall be liberated;  
 God alone can pardon us.  
 The fool believes that daughters, sons and relations belong to him;  
 He sees his wife and is pleased. He knows not that she who brings joy, also brings sorrow.  
 Men of God are imbued with the Word, day and night imbibe Hari's ambrosia.

The mind of the unbeliever wavers and wanders in the futile quest after wealth.  
 We waste ourselves in looking all round while the Real Thing is within us.  
 The perverse preoccupied with themselves do not see it;  
 The saintly secure it in their aprons.

Infidel, who art without virtue, learn thy true origin!  
 The body which is compounded of blood and semen shall be burnt in fire.

Thy body is at the mercy of breath  
 It will last as long as it is fated to last.  
 We pray for long life; no one seeks death.  
 Only he can be described as happy who through the guru's teaching has God in his heart.

Worthless is life without the Name,  
 Wasted is life if it gains not a vision of God.  
 As a man knows not his state when he sleeps at night,  
 So one who hath pride in his heart knows not that he is in the coils of duality and *maya's* serpent.

Hearken to the teaching of your guru,  
 Ponder on the nature of this world  
 And you will see that life and the world are as dreams.

As the fire of thirst is slaked by water,  
 As mother's milk is to her hungry child,  
 As the lake is to the lotus and the fish,  
 Without which they die—  
 So is the nectar or Hari's Name given by the



guru, sayeth Nanak.  
'May my life be spent singing the songs of the Lord.'

*Doongar dekh daravano paeidai daryas*  
(Sri Raga Ashtapadi)

The mountain of life is awesome; I watch it  
from my father's house and am terrified.  
It is steep and difficult to ascend; there  
is no ladder to climb.  
I took my guru's teaching to my heart; the  
guru united me to God and I was saved.  
Brother! the ocean of life is fearful and  
hard to cross!  
If the perfect, the true guru, in his pleasure  
receives me,  
He will take me across on the Name of God.  
If all I do is to say 'I have to go'  
It will be of no avail.  
If in fact I realize that death is certain  
(Then I really know).  
Everyone who comes into the world must go;  
Only God and the guru are immortal.  
Praise the True One,  
Cherish the place where His praise is sung.  
Beautiful gateways,  
Houses and palaces  
Strongholds by the thousand;  
Elephants and horses richly caparisoned,  
Hundreds of thousands of troops—beyond  
all count.  
Not one of these will accompany you on your  
last journey.  
The fool pines away for them and dies in  
his ignorance.  
Man amasses gold and silver,  
He knows not that wealth is an entangling net.

Man may have his dominion proclaimed by  
beat of drum throughout the whole world.  
He knows not that without the Name  
death will ever hover about his head.  
When the body collapses, the game of life  
is over,  
What then shall be the state of the evil-doers?

Man delights when he sees his sons  
Has the sight of his wife on her couch;  
He wears perfumes of aloe and sandal; he  
dresses in fine clothes and ornaments  
Yet shall he leave his home and family;  
dust must return to dust.

However great the title — chief, emperor or  
raja.

Governor, khan, headman or chieftain,  
These are but faggots in the fire of pride.  
Turn your face against God and ye shall be  
As stalks of pampas in a forest fire.

Whoever comes into the world  
Shall depart;  
However proud he be,  
Must die and go.  
The whole world is as a chamber black with  
soot;

The body and soul which enter it are also  
blackened.  
Only they whom the guru preserves remain  
clean

For the fire of desires is extinguished by prayer.

O Nanak! we cross the ocean of life by the True  
Name of God who is the king of kings!  
May I not forget the Name of Hari; may the  
Name of Hari be as a jewel of my purchase.  
The perverse perish in the terrible ocean of the  
world;  
Only men of God cross the fathomless sea.



# Hymns from Var Majh

*Pahley pahrey rain key vanjariya mitra*  
(Sri Raga Pahrey)

In the first watch of night, my trader-friend,  
By order Eternal  
You found yourself in the womb;  
Upside down like a yogi in penance you were,  
my trader-friend!  
Praying to the Lord, meditating thus head  
below and feet above  
Naked did you come into the world of *Kaliyuga*  
Naked will you depart when your time comes.  
As the eternal pen hath flown  
So has your fate been writ on your forehead.  
Sayeth Nanak by divine Ordinance  
Does life begin in the womb.

In the second watch of night, my trader-friend,  
You forget your past meditation.  
You bounced from one lap to another, my  
trader-friend.

As Krishna sporting in the hands of Yashodhara  
You bounced from one lap to another,  
Your mother saying 'This is my son,'  
O stupid and thoughtless soul of mine!  
Knowest not thou that in the end  
You will have nothing to call your own?  
Of Him who gave you birth  
You have no knowledge in your heart.  
Sayeth Nanak, in the second watch  
Man forgets his past meditation.

In the third watch of night, my trader-friend,  
Your mind is obsessed with wealth and youth.

You think not of the Name of God, my  
trader-friend,  
You are concerned only with profit.  
My soul, you think not of the Name of Hari  
Because you are agitated in the pursuit of  
wealth!

In the search for gold,  
Drunk with the wine of youth  
You made no truck with faith  
Nor espoused good deeds as your friends.  
Sayeth Nanak, in the third watch  
The mind is obsessed with wealth and youth.

In the fourth watch of night, my trader-friend,  
The Reaper came to your field.  
Who sent Death the Reaper?  
That secret no one has found, my trader-friend,  
That unravelled secret is in the breast of God.  
God sends forth death on its task.  
False lamentation will break forth all around  
thee

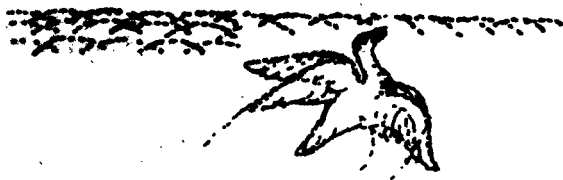
In a trice will you become a stranger.  
All that you loved will be acquired by others.  
Sayeth Nanak, O my soul, in the fourth watch  
The Reaper reaps the field.

*Gur data gur hivai, gur dipak teh loe .*  
(Var Majh)

The guru is the giver;  
The guru is the haven of peace,  
The peace that reigns on snow-clad mountains.  
The guru is the lamp that lights the three  
worlds.







O Nanak, when He vouchsafes you the divine  
gift of faith,  
Then alone is there peace.

(There are ten stages of life steeped in  
ignorance)

First the child's craving for the mother's  
breast;

Then his awareness of his father and mother,  
Of his sister and brother and brother's wife.

Thereafter he takes to games and sports,

He relishes food and drink,

And wallows in lust and passion  
That know no caste.

He hoards wealth, he builds a house.

Then choler afflicts his system,

His hair turns grey, his breath becomes  
wheezy.

(He dies), flames consume his body and reduce  
it to ashes.

His friends lament for a while and go away.

The swan has flown, who knows where!

He came and he went; his name is soon  
forgotten.

For a while the obsequial ceremonies: eating  
off leaf-plates

And feeding crows.

O Nanak, this is the way of those who grope  
in the dark,

Without the guru the world remains sunk in  
ignorance.

*Je rat lagai kapadai, jama hoe palit*

(Var Majh)

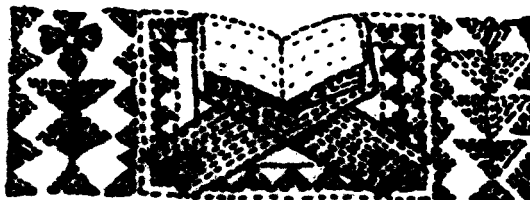
If drops of blood stain a garment and render it  
impure,

How can minds of those who live on human  
blood be purified?

Says Nanak, first cleanse your heart, then utter  
the Name of God,

All else is but a worldly show (that does no  
good),

All else is but practice of falsehood.



*Mehar masit sidak musalla*

(Var Majh)

(If you would be a Muslim true  
Let your life these rules pursue.)  
Make your mosque the abode of kindness  
In it spread the prayer-mat of faith,  
And as you read the *Koran*, think of what is  
just and what is lawful.  
Let modesty be your circumcision—your  
pledge to God.  
Gentle acts the fast of Ramadan.  
Thus will you be a good Mussalman.  
Let righteous conduct be your *Ka'ba*.  
And truth your spiritual guide.  
Let deeds of piety and prayer be your creed  
And what is pleasing to the Lord your rosary  
of beads.  
Says Nanak: The Lord will then preserve your  
honour.



*Hak paraya Nanaka us suar us gae*

(Var Majh)

O Nanak! to usurp another's right is forbidden  
As is the flesh of swine to the Muslim  
Or the flesh of the cow to the Hindu.  
Your guru, the mentor, will stand by you  
If you covet not another's goods  
But reject it as carrion.  
The idle prattler goes not to paradise  
Only righteous conduct releases one from life's  
bondage.  
Forbidden food remains forbidden even when  
flavoured with spices,  
O Nanak! that which is false is forever false.



*Panj nivajan vakht panj*

(Var Majh)

Muslims have five prayers  
Each with a time and a name of its own.  
(Let these prayers these rules pursue)  
First, be truthful,  
Second, take only what is your due,



Third, give alms in the name of Allah,  
 Fourth, make your intentions pure,  
 Fifth, let your voice rise in praise of God.  
 Let good acts be your creed  
 Then proclaim you are a Muslim.  
 O Nanak! (this lesson we must learn)  
 The false will only falsehood earn.

*Mussalman kahavan muskal*

(Var Majh)

To be a Mussalman is not easy  
 Only he who is one in reality  
 Should make the claim.  
 Follow first in the footsteps of the saintly  
 Accept their bitter words as sweet.  
 Rub off the dross of worldly wealth and pride  
 As sandpaper scrapes rust off iron.  
 A Muslim's faith is to follow the Prophet  
 Caring neither for life nor death;  
 To accept the Ordinances of God,  
 To believe He is the One and Only Creator  
 And obliterate every thought of self.  
 Thereafter, O Nanak, if he extends his mercy  
 to all  
 Treats all living beings as the same  
 Himself a Mussalman he can proclaim.

*Machi taru kya karey pankhi kya akas*

(Var Majh)

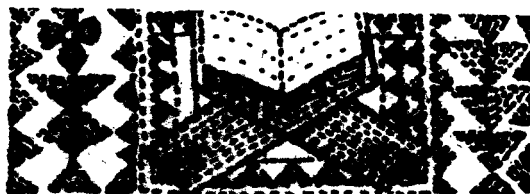
What matters it to the fish how profound the  
 ocean?

What matters it to the bird how vast the sky?  
 What effect does cold have on a stone?  
 What use is a eunuch in rearing a family?  
 A dog with sandal paste you may smear  
 It will not change its canine nature.  
 If the man you speak to be deaf  
 What use is recitation of sacred texts to him?  
 What use their explanation?  
 Put a blind man in the light,  
 Light fifty oil-lamps  
 What difference will they make to him?  
 Place a mound of gold in front of cattle  
 They will continue to munch grass.  
 Burn iron with flux as much as you will  
 It may melt but it will not to cotton turn.  
 Sayeth Nanak, such is the character of the fool  
 For him there in no hope (but only ridicule).

*Kali kati rajey kasai*

(Majh ki Var)

The age is like a knife  
 Kings are butchers  
 The law hath taken wings and flown;  
 In the dark night of falsehood  
 I cannot espy the rising of the moon of truth;  
 I have searched everywhere and wearied of the  
 quest;  
 In the dusk I cannot find my path.  
 Pride that is within is the root of sorrow  
 O Nanak! how shall we be saved (on the  
 morrow)?





# Hymns from Raga Gaudi

*Bhau much bhara vadda tol*

(Raga Gaudi Guareri)

Fear of the Lord is a great fear  
A substantial fear of great weight,  
Beside it man is of small intelligence,  
His words do not carry weight.  
Let us bear the fear of the Lord on our heads as  
we go,  
His grace, our own deeds and the guru's  
teaching will save us.

Without the fear of God none can cross to the  
other shore,  
Fear of God preserves man's love of God.  
Fear of God burns away lesser fears within the  
body,  
Fear and love of God mould man's speech and  
deportment.  
What is fashioned without fear is utterly  
worthless  
Its mould is faulty; it blinds the man whose  
hand gives it shape.  
In man's brain are hatched many worldly plots  
A thousand stratagems fail to fire the oven of  
the fear of God.

O Nanak! the speech of the perverse mind is  
but hot air  
The words it utters are devoid of sense.

*Paunai pani agni ka mel*

(Raga Gaudi Guareri)

Air, water and fire

Of these elements is our body made  
Within it is the restless agitation of the mind.  
It has nine doorways  
The tenth is the one through which one goes to  
meet God.

O learned one, have you thought of this?

Everyone can discourse, speak and listen.  
Only he who thinks for himself is a true scholar  
And a learned divine.

The body is made of clay  
The sounds that emerge are of substance airy.  
Know you, O learned one,  
What dies when a man does *die*?

Consciousness dies  
Then dies the ego  
But the soul, it dies not.

What seek you in pilgrimage to sacred rivers?  
The priceless jewel is enthroned within your  
breast.

The learned pandit reads much, declaims much  
But knows not of the treasure within.

It is not I who die.  
But the demon of ignorance who is destroyed;  
The soul that sustains me dies not.  
Says Nanak, this is what the Lord the Creator  
has shown me  
Now I know there is neither birth nor death.

*Jato jae kahan te avai*

(Raga Gaudi Guareri)



Know you whence comes life?  
 How we are born? Where we go when we die?  
 Why some are caught in the cycle of birth  
 and rebirth  
 While others are freed to merge in the  
 Deathless One?

Those who have Him in their hearts  
 And have His Name ever on their lips;  
 Those who worship Him but seek no return  
 To them gently comes birth and death.  
 Thoughts arise in the mind, in the mind do  
 they subside.  
 Only the guru's word gives us freedom,  
 Contemplating upon it, we achieve  
 deliverance.

Like birds at dusk settling on trees  
 To roost for the night  
 Some joyous, some sorrowing; all lost in  
 themselves.  
 When dawns the day and gone is the night  
 They look up at the sky and resume their  
 wayward flight.

So does man fulfil his destiny.  
 Those who through the Lord's Name have  
 knowledge  
 Know that the world is but a temporary  
 shepherd's hut  
 In a pasture land.

Man is a vessel overflowing with lust and anger.  
 Without stores the shop looks desolate  
 And so does the home  
 So also the human frame without the treasure  
 trove of the Name.  
 The guru breaks down the massive walls of  
 ignorance.

By virtue of your past deeds you meet the  
 holy,  
 Truly joyful are godly men.  
 Those that gently give up their bodies and  
 soul to the Lord  
 At their feet will Nanak prostrate himself.

*Amrit kaya rahai sukhali baji eh sansaro*  
 (Raga Gaudi Cheti)

Lookest thou upon thyself as immortal?  
 Art thou happy in that fond delusion?  
 The entire world plays this game of  
 make-believe  
 Thus hunger, greed and untruth we earn in  
 ample measure.

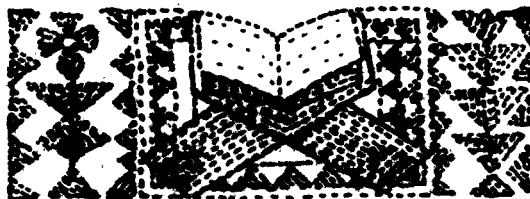
O body of mine! I have seen thee humbled,  
 I have seen thee as dust upon the face of the  
 earth.

My soul, hearken to these words of mine!  
 Good deeds will abide with thee  
 But thou wilt not again have the opportunity  
 to perform them.

I speak to thee, my body  
 Hearken unto these words of mine!  
 Do not speak evil of others, pry not into their  
 affairs  
 Create not mischief and destroy confidence  
 among people.  
 Go not unto other men's wives,  
 Steal not nor commit other evil deeds  
 Thy soul like the swan will fly away,  
 Leaving thee widowed and untenanted in the  
 world.

O body of mine! thou livest in a dream-world,  
 What merit didst thou earn for thyself?  
 It replied: 'I stole whatever pleased my fancy  
 I earned no merit in this life,  
 I gained no moorings in the life to come,  
 Thus did I waste away my human birth.  
 O Baba Nanak, I was really caught in two minds  
 And no one heeded my plight.'

'Strings of horses I had, of Tadjik and  
 Turkish blood  
 Gold and silver I had, I was rich in raiment.  
 O Nanak, none of these could I take with me.  
 All had to be shed, all went to waste.  
 Crystallized sugar and dried fruits, I tasted all  
 They did not last,





I found that only the Name of the Lord is  
immortal.'

'Deep foundations I dug  
And on them raised high walls;  
But the temple I built collapsed in a rubbled  
heap.

I hoarded my treasure, I gave nothing away.  
I was blind, I believed it was mine to keep  
Then like the golden Lanka all was gone.'

O foolish, ignorant soul listen to me!  
Only the Lord's will comes to pass.  
Our Master is a great Merchant Prince,  
We his travelling salesmen,  
Our souls and bodies are His investment  
He fills and re-animates as He wills.

*Avar panch ham ek jana keo rakhao ghar  
bar mana*

(Raga Gaudi Cheti)

They were five, I was alone  
How could I guard my home and my  
possessions?  
They beat and looted me again and again,  
To whom shall I lodge a complaint?

My soul! repeat the Name of Rama  
Facing thee is the army of Yama,  
The god of death.

He raised the body like a house with many  
gates  
Within He put the soul as housewife.  
While she disports herself believing the house  
and all it has  
Is hers forever  
The five are forever plundering her.

Death demolished the house,  
Looted all there was therein,  
And took the housewife captive.  
Death beat her with a rod  
And put a chain round her neck.  
The five took to their heels and fled.  
A wife wants silver and gold,

Friends ask for food and drink,  
O Nanak, one who sins for such cheap gains  
Shall go to his doom bound in chains.

*Rain gavaee soi ke divas gavaya khae*  
(Raja Gaudi Bairagan)

I wasted my nights in sleep  
The days I wasted eating and enjoying,  
The priceless gift of life  
I bartered away for a cowrie shell.

I knew not the Name of Rama  
Fool! You will regret this hereafter.

Man buries his hoard under the earth.  
He seeks not God who is truly without limit.  
Those who go into the world seeking gain  
Lose the Lord when they return.

If all one desired one got  
All of us would be wealthy;  
Not by words but by deeds do we reach  
The goal for which we aspire.

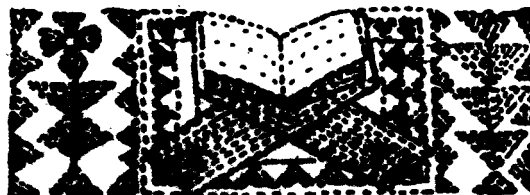
O Nanak, the Creator takes care  
Of what He did create.  
We do not comprehend His Ordinances  
Nor why He makes some men great.

*Jai ghar kirat akhiai karte ka hoe bicharo*  
(Raga Gaudi Poorbi Deepki)

The home in which He is exalted  
Where people meditate on the Creator  
In that home sing songs of praise  
And worship your Maker.

Sing songs of praise of my Lord  
Who is without fear,  
Let my life be a sacrifice to the song of praise  
That is my eternal solace.

Always and forever He keeps vigil  
Over creatures whom He gave life.  
Thy bounty cannot be valued,  
Who dare count Thy gifts?



Settled is the date of my last breath  
 (of my marriage with death)  
 Friends, pour nuptial oil at my door,  
 Friends, I crave your blessings  
 For union with my Master.

To every home is the invitation sent,  
 To everyone will issue the summons some day,  
 Worship Him who sends for us  
 Let the day draw nigh, doth Nanak pray.

*Choa chandan ank chadavau, pat patambar  
 pehor hadavau*  
 (Raga Gaudi)

I may perfume my body with scented aloe and  
 sandal  
 Drape it in silks and satins,  
 Without the Name of Hari, how shall I find  
 happiness?

What shall I wear? What display?  
 Without the Lord of the world, how shall I  
 find happiness?

I may wear rings in my ears and a necklace of  
 pearls about my neck,  
 I may sit on a red mattress adorned with poppy  
 flowers,  
 Without the Lord of the world, how shall I find  
 happiness?

I may possess a beautiful woman with  
 bewitching eyes  
 Lovelier for the sixteen kinds of beauty aids.  
 Without the Lord of the world, forever shall  
 I wander in frustration.

I may have houses and mansions with  
 luxurious couches to recline on,  
 Gardens with gardeners tending flowerbeds at  
 all hours,  
 Without the Name of Hari, they will be  
 abodes of sorrow.

I may have horses and elephants, lancers and  
 bandsmen  
 Militia, mace-bearers and retainers,

Without the Lord of the world, these will be  
 but sham display.

I may gain renown as a miracle maker,  
 Have power to make gold, power to vanish  
 at will.

I may wear a crown on my head and over it a  
 royal umbrella to shade me,  
 Without the Lord of the world, how shall I  
 find truth?

I may be a khan, a chieftain, a king  
 Order everyone about: 'Come here you! and  
 you!'

It will all be sham display,  
 Without the guru's word my affairs will not  
 prosper.

By the guru's teaching  
 I have overcome my ego and my pride;  
 By the guru's teaching  
 I know that God the destroyer of demons  
 Doth within me reside.  
 Nanak makes this supplication,  
 'Master I crave Thy protection.'

*Seva ek na janas avrey, parpanch biadh tyagai  
 kavrey*

(Raga Gaudi)

He who serves the One God will know no  
 other,  
 He does not concern himself with the world's  
 bitterness and strife;  
 By love and truth he is united with the  
 truest of the True.

Such a man is a devotee of God,  
 He sings praises of the Lord;  
 He washes away the dirt on his person  
 And makes his Union with God.

The lotus in our hearts is upside down;  
 The world heeds false messages and burns in  
 error;  
 Only he who meditates on the guru's words  
 will be saved.



The bumble-bee and the moth, the elephant  
and the fish

Like deer meet their doom because of their  
own doings.

So it is with men: cravings makes them blind  
to reality.

Lust fills their hearts; they become lovers of  
women,

Frustration and anger prove their undoing.  
They lose their minds and their poise  
Because they forget the Name.

Concern with other people's affairs makes their  
minds wander in error;

They put halters round their necks and are  
enmeshed in troubles.

Only the saintly who sing praises of God  
escape.

As a widow will for the love of money give her  
body to strangers

So we pledge our minds to others.

Without the Lord as our lover we shall never  
find fulfilment.

Study all the scriptures, all litanies recite  
Read all the religious epics and have them  
explained;

Unless you are dyed in the essence of Truth  
Your mind will wobble in error.

As the *Chatrik* bird loves the rain  
And cries for a few drops to slake its thirst;  
As the fish gambols in the waters,  
Nanak is athirst for the Name of Hari,  
He drinks and his heart is filled with joy.

*Ram nam chit rapai ja ka upjamp darsan  
keejai ta ka*

(Raga Gaudi)

He who in his mind repeats the Name of Rama,  
Pay him homage at the break of day.

If you repeat not the Name of Rama  
Great is your misfortune.

In every age Rama has been the bounteous God.

He who heeds his guru and repeats the Name of  
Rama

Becomes fully integrated;

In his heart beats unstruck by hand the  
celestial drum.

Those who worship Rama and love Hari,  
The Lord protects them in His infinite mercy.

Those in whose hearts lives Hari become like  
Hari,

Their sight and touch produce tranquillity.

In all living things lives the Only One.

Those who turn away from Him are full of  
pride,

And are caught in the wheel of birth, death  
and rebirth.

Only those who find the true guru

Conquer their ego and comprehend the truth  
through the guru's word.

How can we learn the art of union of creatures  
below and the Lord above?

If we receive guidance of the guru, our minds  
comprehend reality.

We are sinners; without any virtues, how can  
we become virtuous?

When the Lord is merciful, sayeth Nanak the  
slave,

His mercy He will shower, and the people save.

*Mundh rain duheladia jeeo need na avai*  
(Raga Gaudi Poorbi)

Long and sleepless is the night (of life)

For a woman separated from the Lord

She wears away pining for Him,

She becomes weak waiting and watching for  
the return of her Spouse.

Her adornments, the sweet delicacies offered  
to her

Are without taste; life has no purpose for her.

Her youth bursting like heady wine turns sour

But youth returns not; her bosom will not fill  
again.



Sayeth Nanak: as with a woman so with us all  
We shall meet the Lord when He wills,  
Else our nights will be long and without sleep.

If the wretched woman be deprived of her Lord  
and Husband

How shall she find fulfilment?

Without her Husband her house will not be a  
home.

Ask her friends and companions, they will tell  
you

Without the love of the Name  
There is no truth, no life of comfort.

In your heart let there be truth,  
Let contentment be your companion,  
In your mind the guru's message.  
These facilitate union with the Lover, our  
Husband.

Sayeth Nanak, a woman who never forsakes the  
Name

Is gently united with her Lord.

Come my friends and companions!

Let us praise the Lord, our Husband.

I will ask my guru and write a message of love  
to be sent to Him,

My guru hath shown me my True Lord.

The perverse of mind will have cause to regret,

My wayward mind has ceased to wander;

It is stilled and I recognize the truth.

The wine of truth renews its strength,

The Word renews the vigour of love;

O Nanak, when the Lord is gracious

Truth is easily comprehended.

'Friends and companions! I am united with the  
Lord,

My desires are fulfilled,  
My Beloved hath come to my home.

Women! sing hosannas to the Lord

Sing songs of joy and bliss.

The Lord hath fulfilled me.

My sorrows are over.

My friends rejoice

My foes are filled with envy.'

Such a woman's prayer is true

And true her earnings.

With the palms of her hands joined she prays:

'Lord, night and day let me live in Thy love.'

Sayeth Nanak, when man and wife are thus  
united

Are their desires truly fulfilled.

*Sun nah prabhu jeo ekaldi ban mahe*

(Raga Gaudi)

All alone am I in the wilderness

O Lord, my Husband, listen to me!

How can a wife be free of care

Unless she finds You who are free of all care?

She cannot live without her Husband

Her nights are long and hard to endure

For sleep comes not to her,

O Lord of Love, listen to my prayer!

Only my Love cares for me, none else gives a  
thought to me,

Alone am I in my lamentation.

O Nanak, the fortunate woman has her tryst  
with her Lord

And becomes one with Him.

Without Him her life is indeed a tale of sorrow.





# Hymns from Raga Asa

*Sun vadda akhai sab koi*

(Raga Asa)

Having heard of Thy greatness  
All say Thou art great;  
How great Thou art  
We shall know when we see Thee;  
Thy worth cannot be valued  
Thy praise not put into words;  
Those who tried to speak of Thee were merged  
in Thee.

O Great Master of mine! of wisdom profound,  
of virtues a treasure!  
Of Thy great apron none hath the measure.

All learned men with their loads of Vedic  
learning,  
All evaluations put together;  
Scholars, thinkers, teachers and those who  
teachers teach  
Could not even a sesame seed of Thy greatness  
gauge.

All charities and giving of alms;  
All penances, all that good deeds gain  
Praises by *Siddhas* who perform miracles  
(all, all are in vain).  
Without Thy aid *Siddhas* could no miracles  
make  
None can come between us if Thou art  
compassionate.  
Sorry is the plight of one who tries to contain  
in words,  
Thy treasure is replete with words of praise.

Whom Thou givest the power need try no other  
ways

'This truth have I beheld,' Nanak says.

*Akhan jivan visrai mar jaun*

(Raga Asa)

By prayer I live; without it I die.  
The Name of the True One is hard to say  
Hunger for the Name of the True One  
Fulfills that hunger and sorrows fly away.

Why then forget Him, O mother of mine?  
The Lord is true, His Name is Truth divine.

Praise of the True Name is a bare mustard seed  
(of His real greatness)

We'll speak of Him till we are weary of speech,  
(We run out of words) and yet not His values  
reach.

If all together we exalted His nature  
It would neither increase nor decrease His  
stature.

He does not die; He suffers no sorrow  
He goes on giving, His bounty never fails,  
This virtue alone hath He  
None like Him there was before  
None like Him shall hereafter be.

Thy bounty is as great as Thy might  
Thou madest the day and also the night.  
He who forgets Thee is of low birth  
O Nanak! one without Name is lowest of the  
low-born.



*Jeta sabad surat dhun. teti jeta rup kaya teri*  
(Raga Asa)

All the sounds we hear are but a part of the  
mighty roar of Thy torrent,  
All the sights we see are but a part of Thy vast  
creation,  
Thou art the taste (in all we taste)  
Thou art the fragrance (in all that is fragrant)  
O mother of mine! no other hath these  
qualities.

My Master is One  
He is One, brother, the only One.

He is the Destroyer and the Redeemer  
He gives and He takes  
He regards and rejoices,  
He is the granter of grace.

He is the Doer of whatever is to be done,  
No one else can make that claim.  
As He deals with us, so we speak of Him.  
Everything doth His greatness proclaim.

In this dark age man's mind is like a brewer's  
vat  
Filled with the sweet wine of delusion.  
Sayeth humble Nanak,  
This is also one of Thy many manifestations.

*Gurmat sachi hujat dur, bahut suanap lagai*  
*dhur*  
(Raga Asa)

The teaching of the guru is true,  
It rids the mind of obstinacy,  
All other clever devices are but an  
accumulation of dust,  
Dust that settles on the mind is wiped  
away by the Name.  
By the grace of the guru, the mind remains  
attached to Him.  
Let us repair to His presence and pray to Him  
All joys and sorrows emanate from the True  
Creator.

He who earns the wages of falsehood

(Will be caught in the wheel of life)  
He will be born to die, die to be reborn, again  
and again;  
Because this hath no end, it is hard to explain  
What (when all is said and done), of what we  
see  
Do we understand or comprehend?  
Without the Name, the mind will not find  
peace  
He that is born must suffer this affliction.  
Delusion and self-esteem bring sorrow in their  
train  
Only those the Lord protects are saved  
He who serves the true guru tastes divine  
ambrosia.  
He stills the wayward mind, He lets us taste  
the nectar,  
He who serves the true guru will drink  
ambrosia  
With the true Word he will attain salvation  
Sayeth Nanak, he will thus expel thoughts  
within of self.

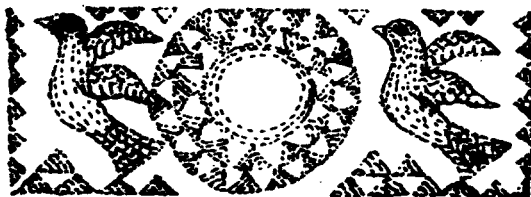
*Niv pae lagau gur apney atam Ram nihariya*  
(Raga Asa)

I bow low to clasp the feet of my guru,  
I have vision of God Rama.  
My mind meditated on Him  
In my heart I saw and enshrined Him.

Utter the Name of Rama and be saved!  
By the guru's grace  
The gem that is God you will find,  
The darkness of ignorance will be dispelled  
And your mind will be illumined.

Mere lip-worship cannot break our fetters  
Nor dissipate delusions of the ego;  
When we meet the true guru, thoughts of self  
disappear  
And we reach our goal.

Those who worship the Name of Hari  
Regard Him as their well-beloved Lord;





Their hearts fill with peace  
As the oceans fill with water.

The Bountiful Giver of life to the world  
Loves those who worship Him.  
Let the guru's teaching guide your thinking,  
Hari will Himself take you across the ocean  
of life.

He who kills himself battling his own heart  
finds God,  
In his own mind he vanquishes his cravings.  
Sayeth Nanak, if the Lord, Life-of-the-World  
be kind  
The gentle path of prayer we shall find.

*Dudh bin dhen, pankh bin pankhi, jal bin  
utbhuj kam nahi*

(Raga Asa)

A cow that yields no milk  
A bird clipped of its wings  
Are of as little use as unwatered, withered  
vegetation;  
So like a king to whom no one makes salutation  
Is the heart without the Name:  
A cell in pitch-black darkness.

When I forget Thee many sorrows assail me  
Lord, forsake me not in my afflictions.

My eyes have lost their light  
My tongue hath lost its taste  
No sounds echo in my ear  
With the aid of crutches my feet move forward.  
Such is the harvest of bitter fruit reaped by  
those who serve not God.

In the orchard of your heart, O man  
Sow seeds of the divine Word!  
Water it in plenty with love.  
Your trees will bear fruit of the One Name.  
If you make not this effort  
How do you expect to reap any harvest?

All creatures are Thine  
If they serve Thee not,



They will reap no fruit.  
Sorrow and joy are as Thou wilt  
Without Thy Name there is no life.

To kill thoughts of self within oneself  
Is true living; there is no other way to live.  
Sayeth Nanak, Thou art the Restorer of life  
Preserve us as it pleases Thee.

*Kaia Brahma man hai dhoti, gyan janeu  
dhyana kuspati*

(Raga Asa)

If thy body were a Brahmin priest performing  
ritual

Let thy heart be the dhoti he wears;  
Let divine knowledge be thy sacred thread  
Meditation the leaf-ring he wears on his finger,  
Instead of alms, beg for the name of God and  
thank Him.

By the guru's favour you will blend in your  
Maker.

O pandit priest! Let the Name of God be thy  
purification,

Let the Name be thy learning, wisdom and way  
of life.

The sacred thread on the body means little  
Unless there be divine light within thee.

Make remembrance of the Name

The mark on thy forehead and thy dhoti.

The Name shall abide by thee in this life

And the life hereafter.

Seek the Name and nothing else besides.

With love in thy heart worship the Lord

And burn away love for wealth.

Seek only the One, seek no other.

See the essence of reality

Through the vault that opens the tenth gate

Repeat His Name and upon it meditate.

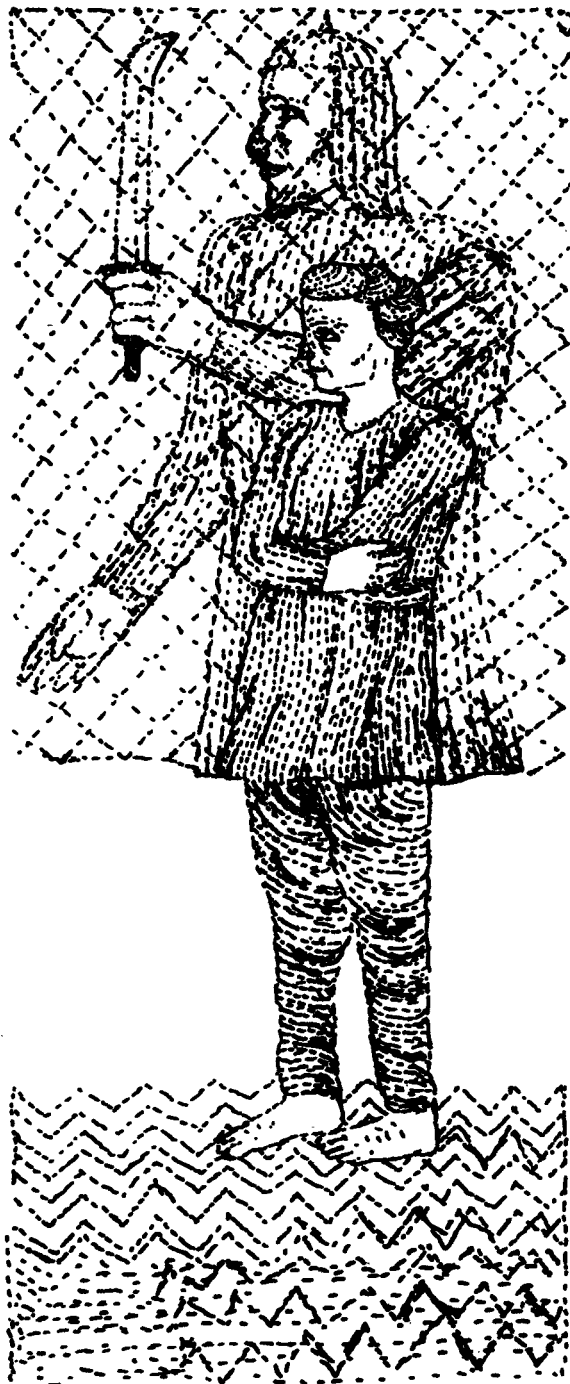
If love be thy sacred food

Fear and superstition will flee;

If the watchman is wakeful

Thieves will not break in at night.

Let knowledge that God is One be the mark



on your forehead  
 Consciousness of the God within the essence  
 of learning.  
 No one can win favour with God by mere  
 performance of ritual;  
 Mere recitation of sacred texts does not  
 reveal His worth  
 His secrets are not unravelled by the  
 eighteen *Puranas* or the four *Vedas*.  
 Sayeth Nanak, only the true guru can show you  
 the Creator.

*Kachi gagar deh duheli upjal binsai dukh pae*  
 (Raga Asa)

The body is like a pitcher of soft clay filled with  
 sorrow;  
 It is made and unmade  
 And each time it suffers.  
 This world is like a turbulent sea,  
 How shall we swim in it?  
 Without the help of God and the guru  
 We will not find the opposite shore.

Except Thee I have no other, my Beloved!  
 O Hari, except Thee I have no other!  
 Thou giveth colour to all that is colourful  
 Thou giveth shape to everything that hath  
 shape;  
 Thou forgiveth those on whom descends Thy  
 grace.

*Maya* is like a wicked mother-in-law  
 Who will not let me make a home  
 Nor let me meet my Lord and Husband.  
 (In gratitude) shall I clasp the feet of my  
 friends and companions.  
 For by the kindness of my guru  
 The Lord hath looked upon me with favour  
 And I shall be saved.

I meditated  
 I conquered my mind and perceived  
 There is no greater friend than Thou.  
 As you ordain, so shall I live.  
 Sorrow and joy you apportion, I'll accept.

Hopes and ambitions have I dispelled  
 I'll seek neither the good nor the neutral nor  
 the evil  
 The blessed fourth stage I'll find in the guru's  
 teaching  
 The assemblage of the saintly will be my  
 sanctuary.

All our learning and thinking  
 All prayers and penances  
 Are directed to God who is beyond  
 comprehension and whose secret is  
 unravelled.

Sayeth Nanak, my mind is imbued with the  
 Name of Rama,  
 Teaching of the guru hath pointed out to me  
 the gentle path of *sahaj* and service.

*Vidya vichari tan parupkari*

(Raga Asa)

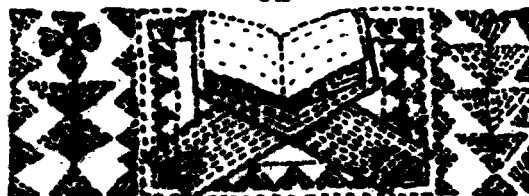
If you desire to acquire true knowledge  
 Make people's welfare thy aim in life.  
 When you master your five senses  
 Life itself will become a pilgrimage.  
 When the mind is stilled  
 It hears the tinkle of a dancer's bells.  
 What then can Yama do to thee?  
 He who abandons desires,  
 Is the real sanyasi.  
 He who has mastered passions  
 Enjoys his body and is a true yogi.  
 He who has compassion  
 And looks within himself  
 Is like a sky-clad Digambar hermit.  
 For he has killed his self without killing  
 anyone.

O Nanak, he who knows Thy sportive ways  
 Knows Thou art One but hath many disguises.

*Tit sarvade bhai lai nivasa*

(Raga Asa)

We live in a pond whose waters



He Himself hath filled with fire;  
Our feet are stuck in the mud of attachment  
We cannot move; many have I seen sunk in  
the mire.

Heart! foolish heart! never dwellest thou  
on the One  
If thou forgettest thy Lord,  
Thou shalt dissipate the deserts of the virtue.  
Neither continent, nor truthful, nor learned  
am I,  
Foolish and ignorant was I begot;  
Nanak prays for the protection of those  
Who never have Thine Name forgot.

*Chhey ghar chhey gur chhey updes*  
(Raga Asa)

Six the sacred texts  
Six the gurus who wrote them  
Six the messages they left.  
But the Guru of all gurus is One  
He hath many disguises.

The text which praises the Creator  
Is sacred; adopt it as your own  
And thereby merit gain.

The blink of an eye,  
Fifteen blinks, fifteen times and twice again.  
The watch, seven and a half watches  
Auspicious days, days of the week and months  
Are but divisions of time;  
All the many seasons there are  
But their only maker is the sun  
(Likewise though many forms He takes  
The Lord our God is One.)  
Sayeth Nanak, the Creator  
Is One, but hath many disguises.

*Lakh lashkar lakh vajey nejey lakh uth karaih  
salaam*  
(Raga Asa)

A hundred thousand footmen, lancers and  
bandsmen be in thy service.

A hundred thousand may rise to salute thee;  
A hundred thousand may obey thy orders and  
their respects pay.

If these honours are not counted on the day  
of reckoning  
Consider them fruitless, a labour thrown away.

Without the Name of Hari, the world's affairs  
are like a maze

The more you explain to your stupid mind  
The farther it strays from the truth  
As blind follow the blind.

A hundred thousand ways we may earn, amass  
and spend  
A hundred thousand may come and go out of  
our hands

If these honours are not counted on the day  
of reckoning  
Where shall we find our sanctuary?

A hundred thousand sermons from sacred texts  
you may hear

A hundred thousand pandits may explain the  
epics to you

If these honours are not counted on the day  
of reckoning  
Consider them a waste: for they have been  
rejected by God.

With the True Name comes honour,  
The Creator's Name invokes grace;  
If day and night He abides in our hearts  
He will be gracious, sayeth Nanak,  
And we shall be saved.

*Deeva mera ek nam dukh vich paya tel*  
(Raga Asa)

The Name of the Lord is my only lamp  
In it I put my sorrows of oil;  
The brighter burns the flame  
The quicker is consumed the oil  
Thus I escape encounter with the demon of  
death.

People, do not mock me!



Just as a thousand piles of logs  
Can be lit by a tiny spark  
(So can the Name set alight the world).

(For my obsequial ceremony)  
Instead of rice-cakes and leaf-plates  
Be used the Name of God.  
The Name of the True Creator shall also my  
oblations be,  
In this world and the worlds to come  
In the future and in time past  
He alone hath been my refuge.  
Lord, Thy praise will be my pilgrimage to  
Benares  
My soul will dip into the waters of the holy  
Ganga  
My ablution will be performed if day and night  
I cherish Thee.  
Some rice-cakes are offered to the ancestors,  
Others to the spirits that wander round the  
globe;  
But it is the Brahmins who eat them all.  
O Nanak, if there is grace upon the rice-cake  
Never never will it go to waste.

*Khorasan khasmana kiya Hindustan daraya*  
(Raga Asa)

He first conquered Khorasan  
Then struck terror in Hindustan.  
The Creator took no blame upon Himself  
But disguised death as the Mughal  
And sent him against us.  
Didst Thou not see the killing?  
Didst Thou not hear the wailing?  
Did not Thy heart fill with pain?  
Thou art the Creator of all mankind;  
If the strong battled the strong  
Our hearts would not be as full of complaint.  
If a fierce lion fell upon a herd of cows  
We would ask the cowherd, where wert thou?  
The priceless heritage was thus wasted  
The dogs thus threw away a priceless gem;  
No one will recall their names when they

are dead and gone.  
Thou art the Uniter and the Divider  
Thou seest spectacles of Thy Greatness.  
If anyone calls himself great  
And indulges in all that meets his fancy,  
In the eyes of our Lord, he is like vermin  
Crawling on the ground nibbling at grain.  
When a man while alive kills his worldly  
desires  
Then alone, sayeth Nanak, can he receive  
The gift of Thy Name.

*Sab jap sab tap sab chaturae, ujjad bharmai  
rah na pace*

(Raga Asa)

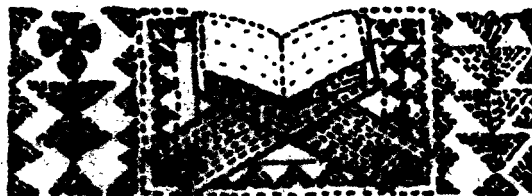
All prayer and penance, all other devices  
Are like wandering in the wilderness without  
finding a path.  
Without understanding one cannot reach one's  
destination.  
And without the Name (there is no  
understanding);  
One's forehead is smeared with the ashes of  
shame.

Our Master is true, immortal He is;  
The rest of the world is born to die;  
By service of the saintly we gain release.

The world is bound in cords  
Of attachment and many hopes;  
Only the teaching of the guru gives a sense of  
detachment.

The name illumines the mind within  
It opens like the bud of the lotus flower  
They (the guru's disciples) fear not the  
clutches of Yama.

Because of men who lust after women,  
The world is dominated by womankind.  
Men love their sons and wives but forget the  
Name,  
They waste their birthright and lose the gamble  
of life  
They forget that service of the true guru is







the greatest service.  
 Men who boast and openly praise themselves  
 Can never anoint their hearts with the salve  
 of salvation.  
 He who by the guru's teaching burns  
 love of worldly things  
 Finds the Name unsullied ensconced in his  
 heart.

His mind ceases to wander and is stabilized;  
 One meets such a one by the grace of God.  
 Without the guru one is lost in the cycle of  
 birth and death  
 By the grace of God we forge union with God.

Fain would I describe the Handsome One  
 But words fail me.  
 How can I speak of One who is beyond the  
 power of speech?  
 How can I evaluate One who is beyond all  
 evaluation?  
 All sorrows and joys are of His making  
 But the True Name conquers every sorrow.

He who understands the Word achieves bliss;  
 For him music is played by hands unseen  
 For him feet unseen beat time to dance  
 Truth is within him; all joy is his  
 By His grace the Protector protects him.

He loses himself but gains the three worlds,  
 He understands the divine message and blends  
 with the Truth.  
 Meditate on the Word, be single-minded in  
 your thought of God.  
 And sayeth Nanak, thank Him who straightens  
 our affairs.

*Man maigal sakat devana, ban khand maya  
 moh hairana*

(Raga Asa)

Our mind is like a rogue elephant crazed with  
 notions of its own might.  
 It lives in a jungle of delusions and  
 attachment.

It runs hither and thither in terror of death  
 If it finds the guru to guide, it will find its  
 sanctuary.

Without the guru's word, the mind will not  
 be stilled;  
 Repeat the Name of Rama, it is utterly pure  
 Abandon other ritual, it is bitterness of the  
 ego.

How can this wayward mind be stilled?  
 Unless it understands, it will suffer at the  
 hands of death.

God is our Saviour,  
 The true guru can unite us with God.  
 He can draw the thorn of death out of our flesh  
 He can make truth triumphant.  
 The mind though compounded of five  
 elements

Determines our destiny for it is the doer  
 And in the mind is law divine.  
 The mind of the fool worships power and is  
 full of greed,  
 By the guru's advice it worships the Name, is  
 freed  
 And attains eternal felicity.

Under the guru's instruction the mind finds  
 its true function;  
 Under the guru's instruction the mind  
 comprehends the three worlds.  
 The mind can be a celibate yogi or the  
 householder.  
 The mind can be a performer of penances;  
 Under the guru's instruction it can realize God.

Thus doth the restless mind come to rest  
 And relinquish thoughts of self.  
 In every heart is the contagion of duality;  
 Under instruction of the guru (it avoids the  
 contagion)  
 It tastes the divine essence of God.  
 And at every door of every home and mansion  
 it is welcomed with honour.  
 This mind of ours can be a monarch  
 And the hero of the field of battle,



The guru gives it the gift of the Name and  
makes it fearless.

Man, conquer your five enemies  
(lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride)  
Reduce them to servitude  
And along with your ego bundle them into one!

The music of the guru's message fulfils  
Man loses taste for other food.  
The guru's message awakens the mind to  
worship.  
It hears music unstruck and meditates on the  
Name  
It understands its spiritual self and becomes  
formless.

In the mansion of the Lord is our mind purified  
The guru teaches it to love and worship.  
Day and night it sings praises of God—such  
grace the guru brings  
In every heart is God who is without end and  
without a beginning.

This mind is drunk with juices of God  
Under the guru's instruction find God, the  
curer of all ailments.  
Sit at the feet of the guru and become a  
worshipper  
Nanak is the slave of the slaves of the  
people of God.

*Jin sir sohan pattian mangi pae sandhur*  
(Raga Asa)

Women whose heads were adorned with  
tresses  
Parting of whose hair was daubed with  
vermilion,  
Their locks are shorn with shears, their  
throats choked with dust  
Once they lived in palaces,  
Now they dare not go near them.  
Hallelujah! Glory be to God!  
Thou wert the First, none hath found Thy limit  
Thou art the Author of all things, Thou seest  
all,

Strange are Thy manifestations!

When they were taken in marriage  
Handsome were their grooms beside them.  
They were carried home in palanquins made  
of ivory  
Basins of water were waved around their heads  
And ornate fans to fan the breeze.

A hundred thousand coins when they took  
their seats  
A hundred thousand more when they stood up  
Sliced coconut and raisins they ate  
On adorned couches they slept.

Their necklaces are broken and their pearls  
scattered  
Ropes are tied round their necks and they  
are led away.  
Beauty and youth which gave them and others  
pleasure  
Have both become their direst foes;  
Soldiers have permission to take and dishonour  
them.

Whom He wills He exalts,  
Whom He wills He punishes.  
Had our rulers but looked at the future  
Would they have suffered such fate?  
Our rulers lost their heads  
In sensual indulgence and pursuit of pleasure.  
When Babar's dominion was proclaimed  
Not a prince of the land could eat his meal in  
peace.

Some have been robbed of the right to  
genuflect,  
Others deprived of time to worship their gods;  
Hindu women have no sanctified squares  
How can they perform ablution and mark their  
foreheads?  
They who thought not of the Name of Rama  
Are now denied the right to call on Allah.  
Some returned to their homes  
Others ask them of the fate of those who  
did not come back.





For some it is writ that they sit and bewail  
their woes.  
What He wills comes to pass.  
Ah Nanak! of what reckoning is man!

*Roodo Thakur mahro roodi Gurbani*  
(Raga Asa)

Excellent is my Master,  
Excellent are the songs of the guru,  
The very fortunate meet the true guru  
And attain salvation.

I am lowest of the low,  
I am Thy slave boy,  
As Thou keepest so shall I live.  
Thy name will ever be on my lips.

I thirst for vision of Thee  
Thy ordinances my heart accepts  
My Master holds greatness in the palm of His  
hand  
If it be His pleasure, I will be received with  
honour.

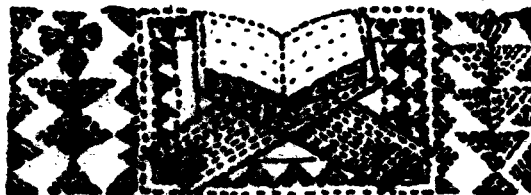
Do not regard the True One as far away,  
He is within us.  
Whichever way I turn, I see Him there;  
Who has evaluated Him?

He makes, He demolishes,  
He watches and glories in His work.  
By treading the saintly path  
We shall have His vision  
And thus appraise His worth.

Such are the doings of the guru  
That in this life we can earn profit.  
But we can only find the true guru  
If it is writ in our book of fate.

The perverse of mind will forever suffer loss  
They stumble in superstition and mislead  
others

The perverse of mind are like the blind.  
If they recall Him not to their mind,  
How can they expect to see Him?



When you have attached yourself to the True  
 One  
 Consider your lives on earth worthwhile;  
 The guru is like a touchstone  
 On meeting him (iron is transmuted into gold)  
 He blends your light with the Light Eternal.  
 Ever and always remain aloof from things of  
 the world  
 Serve only the Primal Lord.  
 Sayeth Nanak, the name produces tranquillity  
 It absorbs us in love of the feet of God.

*Mera mano mera man rata Ram piyara Ram*  
 (Raga Asa)

Believe me, my mind is imbued with love of  
 my beloved Rama  
 The Lord is the Truth, He is the primal  
 person, He is beyond all limits.  
 Him have I accepted as my Rama  
 He is beyond reach, beyond comprehension of  
 the senses

Beyond our most distant horizons.  
 He is the Great God who presides over  
 everything.  
 He was before everything else;  
 He was when Time began,  
 He is and ever shall be.  
 Believe me all else is falsehood.  
 He who knows not the worth of good deeds  
 and piety,  
 How can he understand anything?  
 How shall he attain salvation?  
 Sayeth Nanak, the saintly know the Word  
 Day and night they meditate upon  
 the Name.

Believe me my mind has accepted the Name of  
 Rama as its companion  
 I know that neither ego nor things I love nor  
 wealth will go with me, O Rama!  
 Neither mother nor father, brother nor sons  
 Nor any of cunning devices nor property will  
 help you take them or your wives with you.

I have forsaken wealth, divorced *maya* from my  
 mind  
 And crushed her under my foot.

The Primal Lord showed me the way  
 Wherever I turn I see Him.

Sayeth Nanak, abandon not the worship of  
 Hari,  
 By the gentle path of *sahaj*, you will  
 attain Him.

Believe me, my mind has been purified,  
 It seeks the Truth, O Rama!  
 My sins are forgiven,  
 I am at the meeting of rivers of virtue,  
 O Rama!

I abandon evil ways and tread the path of  
 virtue;  
 I am at the gate of Truth,  
 I shall not be born to die,  
 I have imbibed the quintessence of the guru's  
 teaching.

Noble Friend! Learned Companion!  
 When I meet Thee I see the Truth and am  
 exalted.

O Nanak, the jewel of the Name glitters,  
 Such is the message of the guru!

Truth is the salve  
 This salve I apply to my eyes,  
 I beheld the Lord and loved Him, O Rama!  
 My mind and body rejoiced in Him.  
 He gives life to the world, He is bountiful,  
 O Rama!

He is the giver of life to the world,  
 He is the Bountiful Lord.  
 I have dyed my mind with the colours of Hari's  
 Name,

By the gentle way of *sahaj* He blended me  
 with Him.

I found the company of holy men  
 Companionship of the congregation  
 By the grace of God I achieved tranquillity.  
 Seekers immerse in the worship of Hari,  
 Conquer the cravings of attachment and desire.



Sayeth Nanak, once the ego is destroyed  
The fortunate ones are confirmed in their faith.

*Toon sun harna kalia kee vadecai rata Ram*  
(Raga Asa)

Black buck, listen to me!  
What makes thee break into fenced-off fields?  
Forbidden fruit tastes sweet but for four short  
days  
Thereafter it produces ill-humours in the body.  
What thou cravest produces great sorrow and  
anguish.

Those who forego the Name  
Suffer the flames of hell.  
As short-lived as the wave in the ocean,  
Brief as the flash of lightning,  
Is the joy of forbidden fruit.  
There is no other protector save God.  
And it is God thou hast forsaken.  
Sayeth Nanak, man ponder over this in thy  
heart:

What is it that makes the black buck race  
to its doom?  
O Rama! my mind is like the honey-bee  
(Stealing nectar from the flowers);  
O Rama! it will suffer great affliction.  
I asked my guru about bees and creepers in  
bloom.

The guru pondered and asked me in return  
'Why like the honey-bee art thou lost amongst  
the flowers?'  
When (ends the night of life and) the sun riseth,  
With hot oil will your body be scalded.  
You will be in the thrall of death,  
Buffeted by Yama's blows;  
Without the Word, you will be like an evil  
spirit.

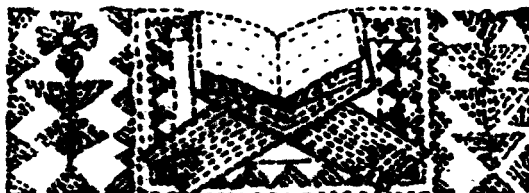
'O my soul!' says Nanak truthfully, 'meditate  
on the Lord  
For the way of the black honey-bee is the way  
to damnation.'  
My soul! thou art not native to this world.

Why dost thou enmesh thyself in it?  
If the True Master dwell in thy heart  
How can the noose of Yama fall on thee?  
As when the fisherman separates the fish from  
the water

And puts it in his net  
The fishes' eyes fill with tears  
(So will it be with thee).  
The world which we cherish as sweet  
Is but a delusion.  
Only in the end is the veil of delusion  
Lifted from our eyes.  
Fix your mind on God  
Free it of anxieties.  
Nanak speaks the truth:  
My soul, ponder over the fact that  
Thou art not native to this world.

O Rama! rivers in their course break into  
streams  
And streams again run back into the river,  
So are our souls united with God from whom  
they came.  
O Rama! some rare one who hath renounced  
the world knows  
That the world which appears so sweet in  
every age  
Is really full of venom.  
Those who meditate on the message of the  
true guru  
Find Truth through the gentle way of *sahaj*  
And realize God.  
Without the Name of God thoughtless fools  
are we;  
We stumble on paths of ignorance and  
superstition.

Those who worship not the Name of Hari  
Nor have truth in their hearts  
Will regret it in the end; they'll beat their  
breasts and lament.  
Nanak speaks the truth when he says  
Through the Word we meet the Truth  
And our prolonged separation ends in ultimate  
union.









# Hymns from Asa-di-Var

Asa-di-Var is a collection of hymns meant to be sung in the hours of the dawn. It is composed in the form of a heroic ballad (*Var*) and is set to the musical mode of the Raga Asa. It is divided into *Slokas* (staves) and *Pauris* (stanzas) following one another alternately as a statement and a commentary thereon. Except for a few verses of the second Guru Angad, the work is entirely that of Guru Nanak.

In the Asa-di-Var, as in his other compositions, the Guru did not restrict himself to a single theme or a logical development of a particular thesis. Nevertheless the one idea that predominates in this work is how man can elevate himself from his low state to a godly one and thus prepare himself for union with God. Some passages of this *Var* were inspired by the *Mundakya* and the *Kattha Upanishads*. It is severely critical of the Hindu's ambivalence of his pretence of orthodoxy on the one hand and sycophantic imitation of Muslim (foreign) customs to please the ruling class on the other.

The *Var* opens with praise of the guru who by bringing out the best in man can make him godlike. Anyone who thinks he can do without the guru is doomed to failure.

God first created the world and glorified His own Name. Then He sat Himself upon His prayer-mat to enjoy His creation.

All that God has created, the cosmos and the laws by which they are governed, are true, just and real. Let us glorify His Name for He alone is immortal and bountiful. He can read

our innermost secrets. We cannot comprehend His ways. He put life into things that have life, gave them different names and assigned them different functions and will judge them accordingly.

We are limited in our comprehension of God-made phenomena—sights, sounds, colours, winds, waters, fire, forms of life, tastes, patterns of behaviour, etc. All we can do is to marvel at them and shower praise on God.

Left to himself, man would consume himself in lust and thus waste his sojourn on earth.

All that is in the world whether animate or inanimate—breeze, streams, fires, clouds, the sun and the moon, mortals and supermen—abide in the fear of God. God alone is free of fear. God alone is beyond reckoning of time. Gods like Rama and Krishna were like jugglers who displayed their tricks in the marketplace and packed up to leave when their performance was over.

Divine knowledge is not found by wandering about the streets; it comes by the grace of God. By God's grace man finds a true teacher (*sat-guru*) who whispers the divine word (*sabda*) into the disciple's ear and helps him overcome his ego.

God Himself created both reality and illusion: we have to learn how to distinguish between the two. We cannot do this by performing ritual for ritual is like a whirlwind of meaningless activity, but only by abiding in the fear of God. Those who fear the Lord, cherish the



Lord in their hearts.

Thou art Formless; Thy Name preserves us from hell. Death is inevitable. No one can stop the march of time. However much we try to disguise the onset of years, age will manifest itself in some way or other.

There are different forms of worship—the Muslims' and the Hindus', the celibates' and the householders'. No one is in a position to ridicule another's customs. Muslims say that because the Hindus burn their dead they go to hell. They do not realize that the clay a potter fires in his oven is compounded of earth in which dead Muslims have been buried.

Without the intercession of the *satguru* no one has, nor ever will, find God because God manifests Himself in the *satguru* and speaks through him.

Ego is the root of all evil. Until we overcome the ego we shall continue to stumble in ignorance without finding the true path. We can overcome ego and find the path of truth by serving and worshipping God, by forsaking evil, by performing good deeds and by being abstemious in what we eat and drink.

Since God created everyone and everything we should leave the cares of the world to Him. Performance of ritual, good deeds, giving of alms, going on pilgrimages, meditation, fighting for righteous causes, etc., are of little avail if there is no divine grace.

Only the *satguru* can tell us how to find God and cherish truth. Those who think they can do this by themselves are foolish and waste their lives without even knowing why they were born. No amount of book-learning can teach us this supreme truth. Book-learning only boosts the ego. Performance of a pilgrimage only makes a person sanctimonious. Subjecting the body to penance does little good as the sense of selfhood can only be eradicated by the divine word (*sabda*). True worshippers (*Bhaktas*) understand this and are forever singing praises of the Lord. They know that all

else, be it in terms of power or of wealth, is illusory. They know the futility of loving human beings who are on the earth but for a brief spell, they know that man is not cleansed by washing or wearing clean garments but only after the filth of falsehood is rinsed out of his system and his heart becomes the temple of Love.

A man becomes pure when he sees the light of God in all that is lit, when he shows mercy and charity towards his fellow-creatures.

Beg for a pinchful of dust off the feet of the faithful, smear it on your forehead, in single-minded meditation think of the One. Your labours will surely bear fruit.

We live in a dark age (*Kaliyuga*) when greed and lust are the ruling passions, our scholars have no learning, our warriors no valour and all are concerned only with their own selfish interests. We do not realize that God knows our innermost secrets and we shall get what we deserve.

Pain is often the panacea for our ills. Comfort can be a curse for those who live in ease and think not of God.

Just as a pitcher, which can only be made with water, can contain water, so can the mind contain knowledge but it needs divine knowledge that the guru gives to make the right kind of mind. If the learned know not these truths, how can we blame those who have no pretence to learning?

Just as the rosary has one big bead in the centre, so do human beings have a chief characteristic. Likewise each epoch has been marked by its own special feature. An epoch can be compared to a chariot and its charioteer. The four *Vedas* of the Hindus were contemporaneous with different gods and prevailed in different epochs. We are now in the dark age when the predominant *Veda* is the *Atharva*, the dominant god is the Allah of Islam and the predominant customs are those of the Muslims whom the Hindus imitate in dress and deportment.



The only way of escape from the evils of the *Kaliyuga* is to find a *satguru* whose teaching is like a salve of knowledge for the eyes.

Be not deluded by appearance. Take, for example, the silk-cotton tree. It is huge, straight as an arrow and has an enormous spread. Yet neither its leaves nor its flowers nor its fruits are of any use to anyone. In humility lies sweetness and greatness. See that when weighed in a pair of heavier scales, the object which is nearer the base is the heavier.

Exhibition of religiosity, parrot-like repetition of sacred texts, daubing the forehead with saffron, etc., is of little avail if there is no truth in the heart.

We come into this world with a clean slate and thereafter gain or lose according to whether we do good or evil. We return as naked as we came and if our record is bad we go into the jaws of hell to repent our deeds.

The Hindus wear a sacred thread. This *Janeau* can be soiled, burnt, lost or broken. Why not make a sacred thread of mercy, contentment, discipline and truth?

Hindus hire Brahmins to whisper sacred formulae in their ears and perform religious ritual for them. Brahmins perish. How can they save others when they cannot save themselves?

See how low the Hindu has fallen! He talks of the sanctity of the Brahmin and the cow and at the same time apes the customs and manners of his Muslim masters in order to gain favour with them. Such are the wearers of the sacred thread. They have no sense of shame because they trade in deceit and falsehood. Be not misled by the caste-marks on their foreheads, their fancy *dhotis*, their fussiness over the place where they cook their food—for what they eat is impure. They cannot wash the evil within them by rinsing their mouths.

God thinks of everyone and assigns a function to each one. If even a mighty king were to go against divine ordinances, he would be reduced to fodder.

If a thief offers what he has thieved for the

souls of his dead forefathers, will they not be charged with theft? Will not the priest who performed the obsequial ceremony be punished?

Falsehood comes as naturally to a liar as the menstrual period to a woman. After her period a woman cleans herself by washing her body; but falsehood can only be cleansed by enshrining God in our hearts.

The rich and the powerful who indulge their whims in things they fancy—fleet-footed horses, beautiful women, large mansions—often forget, till old age overtakes them, that death which is inevitable will put an end to everything.

Cleanliness and purity are not contained in the way we cook or eat our food but in what is in our hearts. It is in what we behold with our eyes, hear with our ears, taste with our tongues and do with our limbs that make us pure or impure. All else is superstition and delusion.

Praise the *satguru* as the greatest of mortals for it is he who teaches you to tread the path of righteousness. He exorcizes the evil within you and prepares you for union with God.

First let us cleanse ourselves; otherwise however fastidious we may be in the way we cook our food, it will be as unclean as if someone had spat into it.

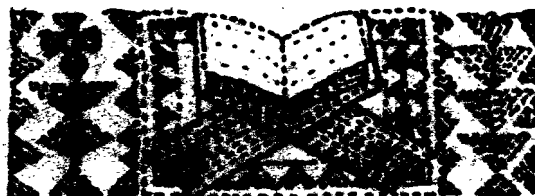
Do not denigrate your women for they are conceived and born as men are conceived and born. We befriend, wed and go unto them. Why slander the sex which gives birth to kings? All who live are born of women; only God (who is Truth and Reality) owes not His existence to any woman.

Everyone speaks of himself; mark the one who says nothing of himself in his talk.

Everyone must pay for what he does; everyone must fulfil his destiny.

Knowing how brief is our sojourn on the earth, why should we flaunt our pride?

Speak not evil of any man and engage not



in argument with a fool.

The slanderer's shafts only poison his own body and soul. No one will give sanctuary to the slanderer, people will spit on him, call him a fool and beat him with their shoes. One who is false in his heart but manages to earn respect and fame is an impostor. He is worse off than a beggar who, although he may be in rags, has attached himself to God, is carefree and rich of heart.

What is in the heart will come out of the mouth. If you sow seeds of poison, do not expect to reap a harvest of nectar.

We shall never get to know God because He is infinite. His is all the power. He puts the chains of slavery round the necks of some, gives others fleet-footed horses to ride. Since He is the Doer of all things, to whom shall we make complaint?

He is the Divine Potter who designed our bodies as vessels. Some He fills with delicious milk; others He lets simmer over the fire; some men are destined to slumber on comfortable couches; others to spend their nights keeping watch over those that are sleeping.

How can we evaluate the greatness of the Greatest One? He is beneficent; He is merciful; He is bountiful and provides for everyone. Let your acts be good, your earnings pleasing to Him. Do only that which will merit the pleasure of the Lord.

#### SELECTIONS FROM ASA-DI-VAR

*Purkhan birkhan teerthan tattan meghan  
khetan*

Mankind and arbours  
Places of pilgrimage by river banks  
Clouds that float over farmers' fields  
Islands and spheres,  
Continents and the universe, the entire  
cosmos.

All that is born of egg and womb,

Born of water and sweat  
Of all these He alone hath estimate.

O Nanak, He knows the oceans and the  
mountains

He knows the masses of mankind  
O Nanak, He who gave life to creatures  
He will keep them in His mind.

He who makes must take care of what He hath  
made!

Let the cares of the world He made be His  
worry.

To Him make obeisance, to Him be victory!  
May His court be in eternal session!  
O Nanak, if we have not the True Name  
Worthless is the mark on the forehead,  
Worthless too the sacred thread.

*Sach to par janeeai ja ridai sach hoi*

He alone is truly truthful  
In whose heart is the True One living  
Whose soul within is rinsed of falsehood  
And his body without is cleansed by washing.

He alone is truly truthful  
Who loves truth with passion  
Whose heart rejoices in the Name  
And finds the door to salvation.

He alone is truly truthful  
Who knows the art of living  
Who prepares his body like a bed  
And plants the seed of the Lord therein.

He alone is truly truthful  
Who accepts the true message  
Towards the living shows mercy  
Gives something as alms and in charity.

He alone is truly truthful  
Whose soul in pilgrimage resides  
Who consults the true guru  
And by his counsel ever abides.

Truth is the nostrum for all ills.



It exorcizes sin, washes the body clean.  
Those that have truth in their aprons  
Before them doth Nanak himself demean.

*Satgur vittauh vareah jit miliai khasam  
sarnaliah*

Blessed be the true guru  
He reminds us of our Master.  
His sermon is the salve of knowledge,  
Our eyes comprehend the reality of the world.  
Those that turn their backs on the Master  
And take service under another one  
Will lose their trade and face disaster.  
A ship to take us across is our true guru  
Those that know this truth are but a few.

*Simal rukh saradya ati diragh ati much*

The *simal* tree is huge and straight  
But if one comes to it with hope of gain  
What will one get and whither turn?  
Its fruit is without taste.  
Its flowers have no fragrance  
Its leaves are of no use.  
O Nanak, humility and sweetness  
Are the essence of virtue and goodness.  
Readily do we all pay homage to ourselves  
Before others we refuse to bow.  
Weigh anything in a pair of scales and see  
That of greater substance does the lower go.  
The wicked man bends over double  
As deer-slayer shooting his dart.  
What use is bending or bowing of head  
When you bow not your heart?

*Daya kapah santokh soot jat gandhi sat vat*

When making the sacred thread, the *Janeau*,  
See that following rules you pursue.  
Out of the cotton of compassion  
Spin the thread of tranquillity  
Let continence be the knot  
And virtue the twist thereon.

O pandit, if such a sacred thread there be  
Around our neck, we shall wear it willingly.

A thread so made will not break  
It will not get dirty, be burnt or lost.  
O Nanak, thou shall see  
Those who wear this shall blessed be.

For four cowrie shells this thread is bought  
A square is marked for the ceremony.  
The Brahmin whispers a *mantra* in the ear  
And thus becomes the guru and teacher.  
But when the-wearer dies, cast away is his  
thread  
And threadless he goes on his voyage ahead.

*Je kar sootak manneeai sab tai sootak hoe*

Once we say: This is pure, this unclean,  
See that in all things there is life unseen.  
There are worms in wood and cowdung cakes,  
There is life in the corn ground into bread.  
There is life in the water which turns plants  
green.

How then be clean when impurity is over the  
kitchen spread?

O Nanak, not thus are things impure purified  
Wash them with divine knowledge instead.  
Impurity of the mind is greed,  
Of tongue, untruth  
Impurity of the eye is coveting  
Another's wealth, his wife, her comeliness;  
Impurity of the ears is listening to calumny.  
O Nanak, thus does the fettered soul  
Wing its way to the city of doom.

*Apey bhandey sajeean apey pooran dey*

God gives shape to human vessels  
And God fills them with what He wills  
Into some He pours milk  
Others He makes simmer on the hearths,  
Some are destined to sleep on soft couches  
Others spend their nights keeping a vigil,  
He saves those whom He wills.



*Vade kiyan vadiyeean*

Beyond speech is the glory of the Great One  
He is the Creator, mighty and benign.  
To each He gives his living  
Our lives fulfil His great design.  
God is our one and only refuge  
Besides Him there is no second one  
Whatever pleases Him, He causes to be done.



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# Hymns from Raga Gujri

*Tera nam karee channatheea jey man ura hoe*  
(Raga Gujri)

If our minds could be made into grindstones,  
Thy Name the stick of sandal to rub upon them;  
If our good deeds could be as saffron  
(And with paste so made we anointed our gods)  
That worship would be worship from the heart.

Let our worship be meditation on Thy Name;  
Without the Name there is no worship.  
We bathe our gods; why not bathe our minds?  
Why not rinse our hearts of lies  
And thus take the road to paradise?  
Learn goodness from your cattle!  
You give them only hay  
With nectar-like milk they repay.  
But man is ungrateful,  
He forgets the Name.  
(He gives no thanks to his Maker)  
Accursed is his life and all he does.

The Lord is beside you,  
Deem Him not far away.  
Forever He watches over us  
And cares for us.  
Sayeth Nanak, whatever He gives we eat  
That is the Truth  
(That Truth is sweet).

*Kavan kavan jachah Prabhu datey takey ant na*  
*parah sumar*

(Raga Gujri)

There is no limit to Thy bounty,

There is no count of those who beg of Thee,  
Thou art most bountiful.  
Whatever be the hunger in the heart  
Dost Thou fulfil it: Thou art Truth Omnipotent  
Thou art the Great Giver.

Ho Sir! Prayer, penance and control of the  
senses  
Need to be supported by Truth.  
If God grants us the gift of the Name  
We attain peace.  
Thy treasure is brimful with devotion.

Many are entranced in profound meditation  
They concentrate only on the one divine Word;  
They are not aware of water nor of land,  
Neither of the earth nor of the sky;  
They are conscious only of the Creator who  
made them all.

Not for them is *maya's* cup of delusion  
For them ignorance casts no shade  
They are not bothered by the eternal light of  
the sun or the moon.  
They comprehend entire creation in the heart's  
eye  
And in one glance take in the three worlds.

They know that God made air, water and fire;  
God made Brahma, Vishnu and Siva;  
We all are but beggars at Thy door  
Thou alone art our Lord, the Great Giver.  
Thou givest us gifts as it pleases Thee.

Thirty-three million gods beg of Thee;  
Thou givest, but Thy store never diminishes.





A vessel held upside down can contain nothing  
Placed as it should be it can be filled with  
ambrosia.

Miracle-makers in trance know Thee in their  
hearts

They beg miracles from Thee  
And cry 'To Thee be victory!'  
Whatever the mind thirsts for  
He slakes that thirst.

Great is the fortune of those who can serve  
their guru  
From them there are no secrets separating guru  
from God.

For them there is no death nor fear of death,  
They know the Word and in their hearts  
meditate thereon.

Neither now nor at any later time  
Shall I ask God for anything besides the Name;  
(The Name) unsullied and Love Divine.  
As the *Chatrik* bird (craves for drops of rain)  
So shall Nanak crave for drops of nectar.  
Merciful Lord, we shall our voices raise  
Give us the power to sing Thy praise.

*Bhagti prem aradhitang sach pyas param hitang*  
(Raga Gujri)

Worshippers adore and love Him  
Their hearts thirst for the Truth;  
With infinite love that the Truth they find;  
With tears in their eyes they plead with God  
And thus attain their peace of mind.  
My soul! repeat the Name of Hari,  
Seek His protection,  
His Name is the raft on which to cross the  
waters of life.  
Make the Name of Rama thy rule of life.  
My soul! repeat the Name of Hari, seek  
guidance of the guru,  
Even death will become thy well-wisher;  
The quintessence of knowledge will be thine  
to treasure

Such will be thy gain if Hari's Name thy heart  
repeats.

Our restless minds run hither and thither in  
pursuit of wealth;

We are obsessed with things of the world;  
The guru's advice and guidance puts  
God's Name and service into our hearts.

Going from pilgrimage to pilgrimage  
Does not wash away doubt  
Nor cure the ills of birth and death  
That beset the entire world;  
Only God's seat is immune from this worldly  
ailment;

The truly wise worship the Name in prayer  
and penance.

The world is ensnared in the meshes of false  
love and longing

It suffers the anguish that birth and death are  
heir to,

Hasten to the true guru's sanctuary and be  
saved,

In your heart repeat the Name of Hari.

The guru's teaching brings stability to the  
mind,

Man meditates in *sahaj's* tranquillity.

Pure is the mind which has truth and the  
priceless ruby that is knowledge.

Let the fear and love of God be your worship  
Fix your mind on the feet of God when you  
meditate

And you will cross the fearful waters of life.

Lord! in my heart be Thy Name

It is the purest of the pure,

My body I place under Thy protection.

The Name of Hari is like a mighty wave that  
swamps

Greed and avarice in the mind;

Pure One! chasten and purify my wilful mind,  
Nanak craves Thy protection.



# Hymns from Raga Vadhans

*Amlī amal na ambdai machi neer na hoe*  
(Raga Vadhans)

To the opium addict there is nothing like  
opium.

To the fish water is everything.  
Those imbued with the Name of their Lord  
Find every prospect pleasing.

May every moment of my life be a sacrifice  
to Thy Name, O my Master!

My Master is like a tree that beareth fruit  
The Name of the fruit is nectar  
Those who drink its juice are truly fulfilled  
May my life be sacrificed to them!

Thou livest amongst all creatures  
Yet I see Thee not;  
How can the thirsty their thirst slake,  
If a wall separates them from the lake?

Nanak is Thy tradesman;  
Thou art my Master and my goods.  
My mind would rid itself of delusion  
If to Thee I addressed my prayers  
And to Thee my petition.

*Mori run jhun laya, bhainey savan aya*  
(Raga Vadhans)

Sweet sound of water gurgling down the  
water-spout

(The peacock's shrill, exultant cry)  
Sister, it's *savan*, the month of rain!  
Beloved Thine eyes bind me in a spell

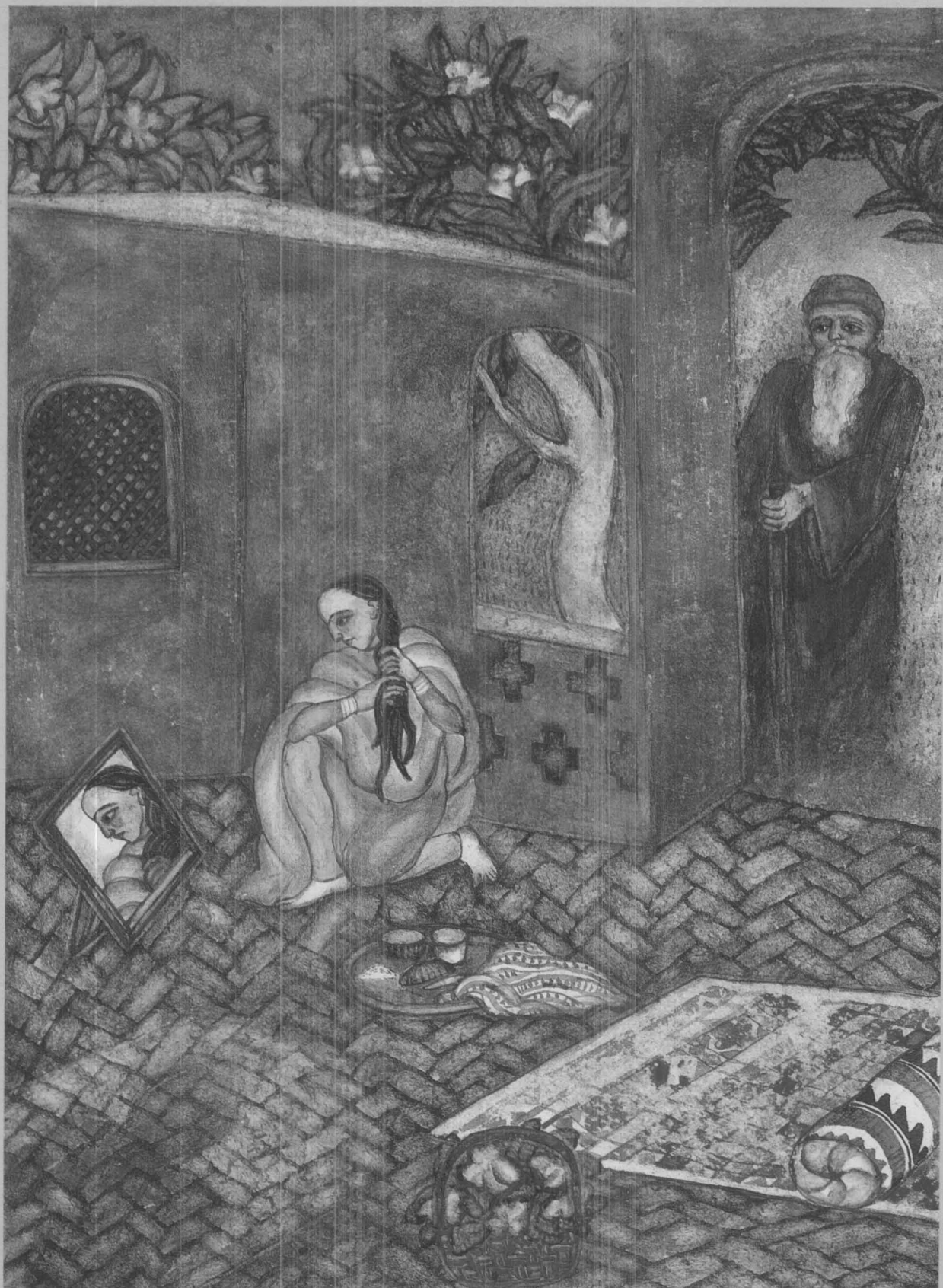
(They pierce through me like daggers)  
They fill my heart with greed and longing;  
For one glimpse of Thee I'll give my life  
For Thy Name may I be a sacrifice.  
When Thou art mine, my heart fills with pride,  
What can I be proud of if Thou art not with me?  
Woman, smash thy bangles on thy bedstead  
Break thy arms, break the arms of thy couch;  
Thy adornments hold no charms  
Thy Lord is in another's arms.

The Lord liked not thy bangle-seller  
Thy bracelets and glass bangles He doth spurn  
Arms that do not the Lord's neck embrace  
With anguish shall forever burn.  
All my friends have gone to their lovers  
I feel wretched, whose door shall I seek?  
Friends, of proven virtue and fair am I  
Lord, does nothing about me find favour in  
Thine eye?

I plaited my tresses,  
With vermilion daubed the parting of my hair  
And went to Him  
But with me He would not lie.  
My heart is grief-stricken, I could die.  
I wept, and the world wept with me.

Even birds of the forest cried,  
Only my soul torn out of my body shed not  
a tear,  
Nay, my soul which separated me from my  
Beloved shed not a tear.  
In a dream He came to me  
(I woke) and He was gone.



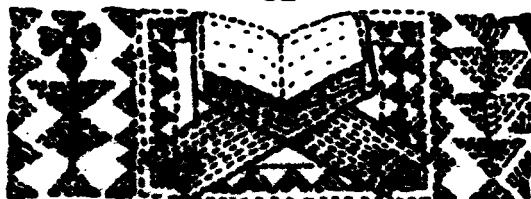




I wept a flood of tears.  
 Beloved I cannot come to Thee,  
 No messenger will take my message;  
 Blessed sleep come thou back to me,  
 That in my dreams my Lover I again may see!  
 Nanak, what wilt thou give the messenger  
 Who brings thee a message from thy Master?  
 I'll sever my head to make a seat for him;  
 Headless though I be, I'll continue to serve him.  
 Why then do I not die? Why not give away my  
 life ?  
 My Husband is estranged from me and has  
 taken another wife!

*Jalao aisee reet jit mai pyara veesrai*  
 (Vadhans-di-Var)

Ritual that makes me forget my Beloved Lord  
 shall I burn.  
 O Nanak that love is best that in the Lord's  
 eyes doth merit earn.  
 The body is like a wife in her home,  
 When her Lord is away  
 She pines for him.  
 If her intentions are pure, she'll be re-united  
 any time any day.  
 O Nanak, unless there be love,  
 False and futile is all talk.  
 Man who calculates good  
 In the spirit of give and take  
 Even for the good he does  
 He doth its virtue vitiate.



# Hymns from Raga Sorath

*Sabhna marna dya vichhoda sabhna*  
(Raga Sorath)

Death will come to everyone,  
To everyone separation,  
Who will hereafter be re-united?  
Go ask the wise ones.  
Those who forget my Master  
Will suffer much tribulation.

Forever worship Him who is the Truth  
By His grace you will gain joy everlasting.

Praise Him as the Mighty  
He alone is and ever shall be.  
Lord, Thou art the One, the Only Giver;  
Mankind's gifts account for nothing.  
What Thou ordainest comes to pass  
All else is as futile as women's wailing.

Many raised forts and castles upon the earth  
Proclaimed dominion by beat of drum—and  
passed on;  
Those who walked with their heads in the  
clouds  
Are now like beasts led by the nose-string.  
Man knowing how like a stake driven through  
the body

Will be thy pain  
Thou eatest sweet things of the world,  
Why dost thou not abstain?

Sayeth Nanak, the more we sin, the heavier  
the chain we forge about our necks.  
It can be severed by good deeds which are like

our brothers and well-wishers.  
When we pass on and our credentials are  
examined  
Those who had no guru are beaten and  
discarded.

*Alakh apar agam agochar na tis kal na karma*  
(Raga Sorath)

Beyond comprehension, without end  
Beyond reach, beyond description  
Immortal, beyond cause and effect  
Beyond the pale of caste and castelessness  
Beyond the cycle of life, death and rebirth  
Self-existent and alone  
Without desire, without delusion.

He is the Truest of the True  
To Him I sacrifice my life.

He hath no form nor colour nor line  
He manifests Himself through His Word  
divine.

He hath no mother or father or other kin  
He hath no woman nor lusts for one;  
He hath no forefathers, nothing contaminates  
Him,  
He is endless, He is infinite.

Thou art the light of all light.  
In every heart art Thou hid  
In every heart burneth Thy light.  
The guru's message bursts open the granite  
doors to understanding



And it reveals the Fearless One entranced in profound meditation.

He created life and over it spread the pall of death

All man's cunning devices He knows and controls.

Serve the true guru, a priceless treasure will be thine.

To gain release, live according to the Word divine.

If thy vessel (thy body) be clean, the True One will enter it and there remain;

But rare are those whose character is without stain.

As essences merge in the quintessence  
So doth man's soul blend in the primal soul.  
Sayeth Nanak, Lord, Thou art my refuge.

*Jis jal nidhi karan tum jag aye so amrit gur pahi  
jeeo*

(Raga Sorath)

The elixir you came into the world to seek  
That sacred font of nectar you'll find with the guru;

Take off your mask and other disguises  
Give up trickery and all other pursuit  
Doubt and duality bear no fruit.

Man, stand firm, go not astray  
If elsewhere you look, yours will be frustration and grief

For the ambrosia you seek  
Is within your heart, within your home.

Abandon the path of evil, take the path of virtue

You'll regret the evil acts you do.

If you know not good from evil, (the further you go)

The deeper in the mire will you sink.

Of what avail is external washing of the body,  
When the grime of greed and falsehood is within?

If under the guru's guidance you worship the pure Name

You will be saved, your inner self be cleansed of sin.

Discard greed and calumny, with falsehood make no compromise

With the guru's teaching pluck the fruit of truth.

As be Thy will, O Lord,

So keep me, I crave.

Praises of Thy Word I'll sing,

Nanak is Thy bond slave.



# Hymns from Raga Dhanasari

*Jeeo darat hai apna kai seo karee pukar*  
(Raga Dhanasari)

My mind is beset with fears  
Before whom shall I cry for help?  
I shall serve the Remover of Sorrows  
He is forever bountiful, He gives me what I ask.

My Master reveals Himself,  
Ever fresh, forever new,  
He is forever and ever bountiful.

Night and day will I serve my Master  
When comes my end, He will be my Redeemer.

Woman who has bewitched my heart, O hark!  
O hear!  
The Lord alone can take us to the other shore.

O Merciful Lord, Thy Name shall be my boat.  
To Thee shall I sacrifice my life forever.  
In all the world Thou alone art True  
There is none besides Thee  
On whom falls Thy grace,  
Are destined to serve Thee.

Beloved, without Thee how shall I survive?  
Grant me the boon that I cling to Thy Name.  
My Love, there is no other to whom I can turn.

Master, Thee alone shall I serve, of Thee  
alone will I beg;  
Forever will Nanak be Thy servant.  
Every joint and limb of my body I dedicate  
to Him,  
Yea, every limb and every joint I offer to my  
Master.

*Jeeo tapat hai baro bar*  
(Raga Dhanasari)

Fires of temptation assail me time and again,  
I weaken and am a prey to many ills;  
I forgot the guru's hymns  
And like one chronically sick and in bodily  
pain

I groan and moan and complain.

Too much talk is foolish prattle  
Without our telling  
He knows everything  
That is worth knowing.

He who gave us ears, eyes and nose,  
Who gave us tongue so cunning of speech,  
He who preserved us in the furnace of the  
womb

At His bidding is all the breath we breathe.

As strong our attachments, our loves and  
cravings  
So black is the stain they leave on our  
reputations.

Those who pursue the path of transgression  
will be branded  
And will not find a seat in His presence.

By Thy grace we have power to worship Thy  
Name

Thy Name alone saves, we have no other  
recourse.

Even those sunk can thus be salvaged  
O Nanak, the True One is bounteous towards  
everyone.





*Chor silahai cheet na bheejai, jey badī karai  
ta tasoo na chheejai*

(Raga Dhanasari)

Words of praise from a thief do not please the  
mind  
Nor words of calumny spoken by him in the  
least detract;  
For a thief no one stands surety, no one will  
hold a brief  
How can anything good be expected of a thief?  
My mind, listen! thou blind, base cur! listen  
forsooth  
Without being told, the True One finds the  
Truth.

A thief may appear learned and wise  
He'll be a base coin worth two pies  
However much you mix the base with the  
genuine  
Base will be found to be base when carefully  
examined.

As our acts, so will our deserts be  
As we sow, so shall we reap;  
Of himself whatever a man may say  
(It changes not his real self) his senses  
determine his way.

A hundred lies he may tell to cover up his filth  
and falsehood;  
He may win acclaim all over the world.  
(It will not help, the base can never be good)  
If it be Thy will, even a fool wilt Thou receive  
O Nanak, He is wise and omniscient,  
Nobody doth the Lord deceive.

#### ARTI

*Gagan mai thal ravi chand dipak banai*  
(Raga Dhanasari)

The firmament is Thy salver  
The sun and moon Thy lamps;  
The galaxy of stars as pearls strewn.

A mountain of sandal is Thy joss-stick  
Breezes that blow Thy fan;  
All the woods and vegetation  
All flowers that bloom  
Take their colours from Thy light.

Thus we wave the salver of lamps  
How beautiful is this ritual!  
Thou art the destroyer of the cycle of birth,  
death and rebirth.  
In Thy temple echo beats the drum unstruck  
by hands.

A thousand eyes hast Thou, yet no eye hast  
Thou.  
A thousand shapes hast Thou, yet no shape hast  
Thou.  
A thousand feet hast Thou, yet no foot hast  
Thou.  
A thousand nostrils hast Thou, yet no nose  
hast Thou.  
These are miracles that have bewitched my  
heart.

Thine is the light in every lamp.  
Thine the radiance in all that is radiant.  
The guru's teaching illumines our minds.  
What pleases Him is the true worship of lamps.

As the honeybee seeks honey in flowers  
My soul which is ever athirst,  
Seeks Thy lotus feet  
To slake its thirst for nectar.

Lord, show Thy mercy  
Give Nanak the water he seeks.  
He like the *sarang* cries for rain  
Let him forever abide in Thy Name.

*Gur sagar ratani bharpoorey, amrit sant  
chugaih nahi doorey*  
(Raga Dhanasari)

The guru is a sea full of pearls  
The saintly are like swans that feed  
And are never far from its shore.





They pick up their share of the nectar (of the Name)

The Lord loves them and holds them dear.  
In this sea the swans find God, the Lord of life.

The wretched heron wades in the dirty pond  
It wallows in the mire, it cannot be cleansed.  
The wise watch their steps ere they go  
They reject duality and worship God as the Formless One.

They drink nectar and attain salvation  
The guru rescues them from the cycle of death and rebirth.

Swans never leave the sea,  
With love and adoration they gently become a part of it.  
Then is the swan in the sea and the sea within the swan  
It knows the unknowable and pays homage to the guru's words.

Entranced in profound meditation is the Divine Yogi

He is neither male nor female, how can one describe Him?  
In the three worlds is His divine light worshipped  
Gods and men and ascetics seek refuge in Him.

God is the root of the tree of bliss,  
He is the Protector of the helpless;  
In meditation and in worship  
Men of God follow the gentle method of *sahaj*.  
God cherishes His worshippers, He is the Destroyer of fear  
Man conquers his ego, his steps turn towards the Lord.

Man tries countless other devices but death dogs his footsteps;  
For those who came into the world, death is destined  
Life is an invaluable gift, man squanders it in duality,  
He knows it not himself, he stumbles in

doubt and sorely grieves.

Those who know speak, read, and hear praises of the One God,

The God who supports the earth,  
He instils in them faith and fortitude, and becomes their protector.

Their minds become chaste, righteous and self-controlled

If they choose, they attain the fourth estate.

So pure are the truthful, nothing can soil them;  
The guru's teaching dispels doubt and fear.

Nanak begs of the Truthful One, the Primal Lord

Handsome of face and feature which are beyond compare.

*Teerath navan jao teerath Nam hai*  
(Raga Dhanasari Chhant)

Why go ye on pilgrimage to bathe in holy waters?

Know that real pilgrimage is worship of the Name!

True pilgrimage is meditation on the Word and knowledge of the self.

Knowledge imparted by the guru is more real (than a sacred river bank);

It is more rewarding than bathing on the ten holy days;

It is like an unending festival of Dussehra.

Forever shall I beg the Name of God, Hari.

God, Sustainer of the world, give Thy Name to me!

The world is sick, God's Name is the remedy.

If we do not have the Name of the True One

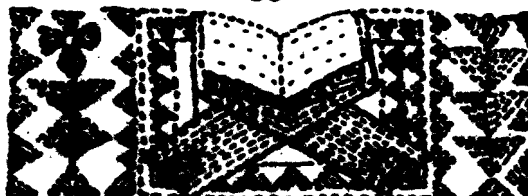
We shall forever be smeared in sin.

The guru's teaching is pure, eternally effulgent.

It is ever the truest pilgrimage and ablution.

Dirt does not stick to those who are truthful

They have no need to scrub or rinse themselves.



If you string a garland of good deeds round  
your neck,  
You need not then raise cries of regret.  
Contemplation conquers ego,  
It helps man save himself and save others.  
It prevents rebirth.

The one who contemplates becomes the  
supreme meditator.  
The touchstone (whereby all truths are tested)  
The truthful please the Truthful One.

Day and night is he in true ecstatic bliss  
Sin and sorrow do not afflict him.  
He hath found the Name of the True One.  
The guru hath shown him the way to God.  
No sin can stain him because  
The True One abides in his heart.

Meeting and companionship of the men of  
God is real bathing, true pilgrimage,  
One who sings the songs of the Lord is himself  
exalted,

Praise the True One, have faith in the true guru.  
Thy nature will turn to giving alms and charity,  
Performing of good deeds and acts of mercy.  
If thou love being with thy Lord  
In the gentle stream of *sahaj* wilt thou then  
bathe

It is a stream as holy as the *Sangam*  
(Where meet Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati).

Thou shalt be the truest of the true;  
Thou shalt worship the One God who is the  
truth

And whose bounty ever increaseth.

Friends! company of the saintly  
Is the way to salvation.

God grants this in His grace and unites us with  
Himself.

Everyone speaks of the Lord  
Who can say how great He is?  
I am foolish, low-born and ignorant  
I learn from the guru's teaching  
Which is like drinking pure nectar.

It persuaded my mind to accept the truth.  
We come into the world with a load of sin,  
We depart with the self-same load.  
Only my guru's teaching explains the truth  
to me.

We can endlessly talk of the Lord; He Himself  
is the keeper of the treasure of worship.

His presence is felt everywhere.

Nanak speaks the truth and pleads

He who cleanses his heart is truly cleansed.



# Hymns from Raga Tilang

*Yak arj guftam pes to dar gos kun kartar*  
(Raga Tilang)

Creator! a petition I place at Thy door  
Give ear and hear what I have to say.  
Thou art just, great, merciful and of evil free  
Thou art Protector of all things that be.

We must always bear in mind  
That the world is perishable.  
The angel of death hath my hair in his grasp  
And yet my heart hath no knowledge of it.

Neither wife nor son, neither father nor  
brother,  
Not one can extend to me a helping hand!  
When comes my time to depart,  
Time to say the final prayer  
No one will hear my call,  
And to my rescue come.

Night and day, I trod the path of greed  
My mind thought only evil thoughts  
I did not do any good deed.

I am unfortunate, niggardly and thoughtless,  
A shameless wretch am I;  
I have even lost the fear of God.  
Sayeth Nanak, Thy slave am I,  
Yea, I am the dust of the feet of Thy slaves.

*Ih tan maya pahia pyarey leetda lab rangae*  
(Raga Tilang)

Dear friend, I am like one drowned in a dyer's  
vat

Brimful with delusions of *maya*  
I have become like a cloth dyed with greed.  
Dear friend, the colour of my cloak  
Pleases not the Lord my Groom.  
How then shall I who am His bride,  
Be invited to His nuptial couch?

Let my life be a sacrifice unto Thee,  
O Merciful One!  
Let my life be a sacrifice!  
Let my life be a sacrifice to those who  
worship Thy Name.  
Yea, let my life be sacrificed to them a  
hundred times.

Dear friend, if the body be like a dyer's vat  
We must fill it with the madder of the Lord's  
Name;  
The Divine Dyer will dye it in hues none hath  
ever seen.

Dear friend, she whose garment is thus dyed  
Hath the Lord her Groom by her side.  
Nanak prays for the dust of her feet.

The Lord weaves the cloth and dyes it.  
He Himself appraises the colours.  
Sayeth Nanak, if the woman thus adorned  
please Him  
He will be gracious and take her unto Himself.

*Jaise mai avai khasam ki bani taisada karee*  
*gyan vey Lalo*

(Raga Tilang)

The voice of the Lord came to me



What it told me, I shall tell thee, O Lalo.  
 Babar disguised as a bridegroom hath hastened  
 down from Kabul;  
 His hordes are perpetrators of sin,  
 With force of arms he demands the gift (of a  
 bride)  
 Propriety and laws have gone into hiding,  
 Falsehood comes to the fore, O Lalo.  
 Nobody invites the Qadi or the Brahmin,  
 Satan is asked to recite the marriage vows.  
 Muslim women recite the *Koran*,  
 And in anguish they call on Allah.  
 Hindu women of castes high and low,  
 Suffer the same fate, O Lalo.  
 O Nanak, they praise bloody violence in their  
 marriage songs  
 (Instead of saffron) they smear the bride's  
 parting of hair with blood, O Lalo.

Nanak shall ever sing praises of his Master.  
 For this charnel-house he hath composed the  
 following lines:

'He who created life and involved it in living  
 Now sits aloof and beholds the goings-on (the  
 killing)

The Master is true, just are His dictates  
 And just are His decisions.  
 Our bodies and their covering  
 Will be slashed and tattered to shreds.  
 People of India, remember my words!  
 In 78 they will come, in 97 they will depart  
 In their stead will rise a man  
 The disciple of manly man.'  
 Nanak makes this prophecy  
 The prophecy will be true  
 As time will soon testify.



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# Hymns from Raga Suhi

*Jog na khintha, jog na dandey, jog na bhasam  
chadhaecai*

(Raga Suhi)

Religion lieth not in the patched coat the yogi  
wears,

Not in the staff he bears,

Nor in the ashes on his body.

Religion lieth not in rings in the ears,

Not in a shaven head,

Nor in the blowing of the conch-shell.

If thou must the path of true religion see,

Among the world's impurities, be of impurities  
free.

Not by talk can you achieve union

He who sees all mankind as equals

Can be deemed to be a yogi.

Religion lieth not in visiting tombs

Nor in visiting places where they burn the dead

Not in sitting entranced in contemplation

Nor in wandering in the countryside or foreign  
lands

Nor in bathing at places of pilgrimage.

If thou must the path of true religion see,

Among the world's impurities, be of impurities  
free.

When a man meets the true guru

His doubts are dispelled

And his mind ceases its wanderings;

Drops of nectar pour down on him like rain.

His ears catch strains of *sahaj's* celestial music

And his mind is lit up with knowledge divine.

If thou must the path of true religion see,

Among the world's impurities, be of impurities  
free.

Sayeth Nanak, if thou must be a real yogi,  
Be in the world but be dead to its tinsel values.  
When the lute strikes notes without being  
touched

Know then that thou hast conquered fear.

If thou must the path of true religion see,

Among the world's impurities, be of impurities  
free.

*Sabh avgun mai gun nahi koe*

(Raga Suhi)

Full of evil, no virtues have I

How will I my husband meet?

My face is not comely, there is no lustre in my  
eyes

I have no lineage, no winsome ways, nor sweet  
speech.

She who comes adorned with the beauty nature  
gave

Shall find favour with her Lord

And her marriage consummated.

He hath neither form nor shape

But seek Him now.

Put of not prayer till the end is near.

I have no sense, no learning, no ability

Lord have mercy, let me clasp Thy feet.

What avail is my youth

If it please not my Lord?

*Maya* hath deluded me; I have lost my way.





When the notion of self goes, God enters  
 Then the bride finds her Groom and the nine  
 treasures.  
 Many lives have I spent sorrowing separated  
 from Thee  
 My Lord, my lover take me in thine arms and  
 save me  
 Says Nanak: those He likes, He accepts  
 The Lord is—and ever shall be.

*Manas janam dulambh gurmukh paiya*  
 (Raga Suhi)

Human birth is a rare opportunity,  
 Only the saintly know its worth.  
 If the guru is gracious (he will grant me the  
 boon)  
 My mind and body will be serene as the moon.  
 When comes the time for them to go  
 The saintly take their accumulated wealth of  
 good deeds.  
 Through the guru, they know the fear of God;  
 They are given a place of honour in the court  
 of God.  
 He who with his mind and body praises the  
 Truth  
 Is pleasing to the Truthful One.  
 The perfect guru persuades the mind and it is  
 merged in the Lord.  
 Lord, let me live a virtuous life!  
 Lord, abide Thou within me!  
 With Thee ever within my mind  
 I'll take the gentle path of *sahaj*  
 And joy everlasting find.  
 Many a time have I told myself, admonished  
 my foolish mind  
 'Learn from the guru, sing the Lord's praises  
 Immerse thyself in His love.'  
 Ever have the Beloved Lord in your heart  
 If thou treadest the path of virtue,  
 Sorrow will not dog thy footsteps.  
 Those who turn away from the Lord  
 Will be lost in a maze of doubt  
 And will not know what it is to love God.

Such a one will die estranged,  
 His body and soul be stained.  
 Under the guru's instructions earn goodness  
 And take home thy gains;  
 Through the guru's hymns comprehend the  
 Word and be free  
 Nanak hath but one prayer:  
 'If it please Thee  
 Grant me shelter of the Name,  
 Let me sing praises of Hari.'

*Sau ulame dinai key rati milan sahan*  
 (Raga Suhi)

The day's hundred regrets  
 By night multiply tenfold;  
 As a swan instead of feeding on pearls  
 (Which are its real sustenance)  
 Pecks at carrion  
 So man forgets to sing hosannas to his God  
 (Which are the real sustenance for his soul  
 And turns instead to the fleshpots of the  
 world).  
 Cursed be the life thus wasted  
 In stuffing food and increasing the paunch.  
 The Name of the True One changes not; that  
 much we know  
 All else, sayeth Nanak, turns from friend to foe.

*Deeva balai andhera jai, bed path mati papa  
 khai*  
 (Raga Suhi Slok)

When a lamp is lit, darkness is dispelled  
 Where scriptures are read, evil thoughts are  
 expelled.  
 When the sun rises, the moon is not seen  
 When knowledge comes, ignorance is  
 dispelled.  
 The reading of the *Vedas* is now a worldly trade  
 O pandit! you read much, but without thought,  
 Without understanding this reading is a loss.  
 Says Nanak, only those the guru loves will go  
 across.



# Hymns from Raga Bilaval

*Too sultan kaha hau miyan teri kavan vaddiaee*  
(Raga Bilaval)

Thou art the Sultan  
If I address Thee as the village headman  
Do I magnify Thy Name?  
Lord, I address thee as Thou hast empowered  
me  
I am foolish and know not the art of polite  
speech.

As Thou instructest me so shall I word my  
praise  
Thy will shall be my way of life, in Thy truth  
shall I abide.

All that comes to pass is at Thy bidding  
Everything that happens is within Thy  
knowing  
My Master, I know not Thy dimensions  
I have no means of knowing, I am blind.

What shall I say? I tried to speak  
I learned that I could not speak of One  
Who is beyond description.  
I can only say as much as Thou wilt me to  
say  
And that is but a tiny fragment of Thy real  
greatness.

A homeless dog amongst a pack of dogs am I  
I go about yelping for food to fill my belly.  
O Nanak, one deprived of the ability to  
worship,  
Is like a woman who knoweth not the name of  
her Lord.

*Man mandir tan ves kalandar ghat hee teerth*  
*nahvan*

(Raga Bilaval)

I have made my mind my temple  
My body I have dressed in a pilgrim's garb  
In my heart are the holy waters in which I  
bathe.

His word to me is the very breath of life  
I'll be born no more, ended is my strife.

My mind is engrossed in the Merciful Lord,  
O Mother.

Who can know of my heart's sorrow?  
Except my Lord, I think of no other.

You who are beyond reach, beyond  
description, beyond knowledge,  
You who are limitless,  
Think of us!

You are spread over the waters  
And across the land.  
In the spaces between the heavens and the  
earth

Are You,  
In every heart burns bright Your light.

All teaching, all understanding, all  
comprehension

As You ordain all this is.  
You are the shade in which we rest  
And the mansions we raise.

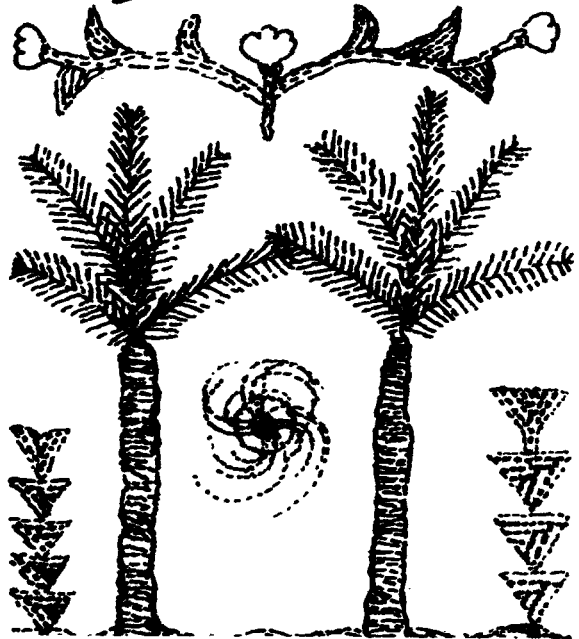
None other besides You will I ever know,  
O Master,



Forever shall I sing in praise of You.

Men and beasts, all Your shelter seek  
You have to look after everyone.

This is Nanak's one prayer and only request  
That he look upon Your will as the best.



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# Hymns from Siddha Goshta

*Siddha Goshta* is based on a dialogue said to have taken place between Guru Nanak and a band of yogis who came to visit him either at Achal Batala (Bhai Gurudas Var I, paudi 39-44) or at Gorakh Hatri (*Puratan Janam Sakhi*). It deals largely with the respective merits of *Hath-Yoga* advocated by yogic followers of Guru Gorakhnath and *Nama-marga* preached by the guru. In this composition the guru also spells out in greater detail his notion of terms like *sahaj* and *sunya* as well as the personalities of the guru and a *gurmukh*.

## Selections from Nanak's Dialogue with the Yogis

(Raga Ramkali)

The yogis took their seats on their prayer-mats  
And spake in chorus: 'Our salutations to this  
holy assemblage!'

'I salute Him who is the Truth,' replied Nanak,  
'Who is Infinite, Who is without any limit.  
Fain would I sever my head with my own hand  
And lay it at His feet!  
To Him I dedicate my body and my soul.  
Truth is however also found in the company of  
the holy  
And through them the soul is led by the path  
of *sahaj* to glory.

But what use is it to wander in the wilderness?  
Through truth alone is true purification  
Without the True Word there is no salvation.'

'Who art thou?' the yogis asked, 'What is thy name?

What path dost thou pursue?

What is thy life's aim?

Pray tell us all, to us be true.'

'To men of God my life be sacrificed',  
Nanak made obeisance and replied.

'Where is thy seat?' persisted the yogis,  
'Son, where is thy home?

From where hast thou come?

Where wilt thou go when thou goest away?

Thou hadst renounced the world to become a  
wandering hermit

What path wilt thou pursue, tell us we pray?'

'He that dwells in every heart  
Within Him I've made my seat,' replied  
Nanak.

'Whichever way I'm directed by the true guru  
That is the path I pursue.

Gently did I come from God

To God shall I return

Nanak shall forever live according to His will.

My seat is my prayer-mat

I worship the immortal Narayana.

This was I taught by my guru

Through the guru did I come to know myself

And merged myself in the Truest of the True.'

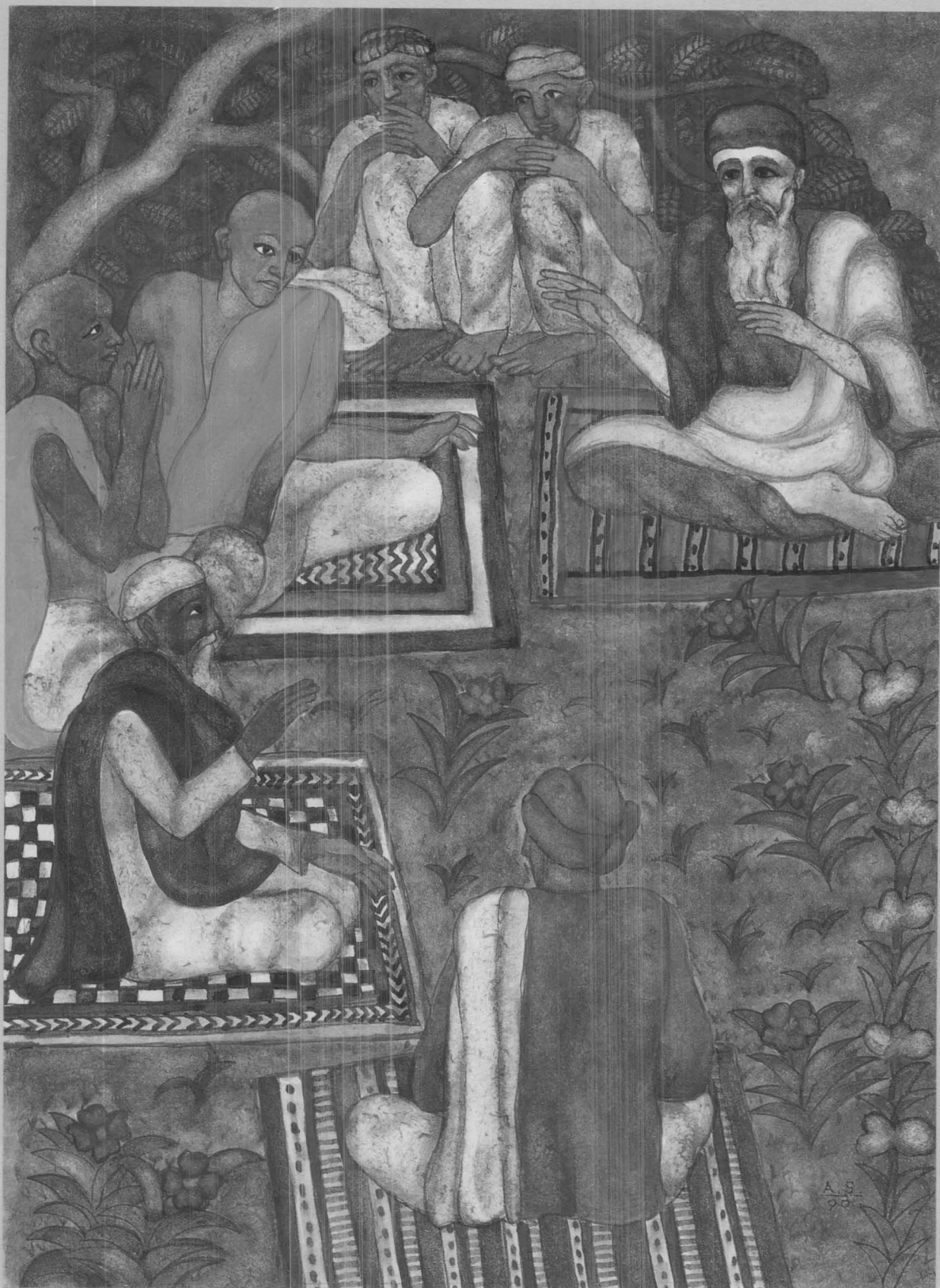
Then spake one of them, called Charpat Yogi:

'They say the world is like a turbulent sea,

A sea which no one can swim over.

How then can we find the other shore?





Nanak, detached from the world dost thou live  
Ponder over the problem and the true answer  
give.'

Nanak replied: 'When someone poses a  
question in such form  
That the question itself contains the answer;  
What answer can anyone give such a question?  
If you claim to have reached the other shore  
Why ponder over this problem any more?  
As the lotus in the water is not wet  
Nor the water-fowl sporting in a stream  
Fix your mind on the guru's words and thus,  
Says Nanak, cross the world's sea to your  
Lord Supreme.

He who in a crowd can be alone  
In a multitude of desires is without desire  
Such a one has access to the Inaccessible  
And knows the Unknowable.  
Having himself had the vision  
He shows others to see  
Nanak is the slave of such a one.'

'Master, listen to me,' pleaded one,  
'Be not offended by my question!  
How does one reach the gate of the house  
of the guru?  
Much have I pondered over this problem, I  
tell thee true.'

'This mind of ours is restless,' said Nanak  
'It is brought to rest by the anchor of the Name  
Then does it find its true abode and  
resting-place  
The Creator unites it with Himself and thus  
Is conceived love for the truth (by His grace).

'Shun the shops and highways of the cities,  
Amidst trees of forests go and stay  
Wild roots and berries be the food you eat  
Sages who know say this is the way.  
Go bathe at places of pilgrimage  
Go pluck the fruits of peace  
The filth of the world will not soil you.  
If union with God be your goal, says Loharipa  
son of Gorakhnath,  
This is the only way of life as you will see.

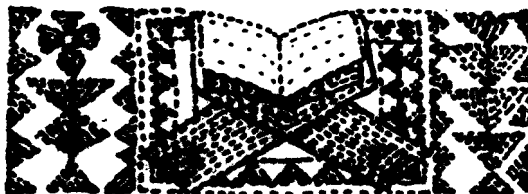
'Among shops and highways may you live  
Only be vigilant and never slumber  
Let not your mind stay and dwell  
On the wife or wealth of a stranger.  
Without the Name the mind will never be  
stable  
Nor, says Nanak, from worldly hankerings be  
ever free.  
My guru has shown me cities and shops within  
my heart.  
There can I easily trade and earn truthful  
gain.  
Says Nanak, the essence of asceticism, let it be  
understood,  
Is to abstain from too much sleep and too much  
food.

'Examine the schools of philosophy  
Accept one that is pre-eminent  
Wear rings in your ears and  
The hermit's cloak on your person.  
Carry the beggar's bowl  
Of the twelve orders choose one  
Of the six schools to one subscribe  
If you take my advice, my son,  
You will be spared the buffeting of chance  
The sage achieves the goal of divine union.

'Let the divine word be always within you  
Overcome your ego, erase attachment to  
worldly things  
The guru's word will help you conquer  
Pride in self, lust and anger.  
What means the patched cloak and begging  
bowl?

It's better to know that the spirit of God  
pervades  
Nanak knows that only God can save  
He is the Truth, His name is True  
I found this by testing the words of the guru.

'Instead of putting upside down your begging  
bowl  
Turn your back on worldly things.  
Little use is it to wear the yogi's cap upon your  
head



From the five elements take their quality  
instead.  
Instead of a mattress to preserve you from dust  
Keep your body clean by acts of purity  
Instead of a jock-strap to check your lust  
Bend your mind towards chastity.  
Truth, tranquillity and self-control be ever  
your guides.  
Says Nanak, learn from the guru, the Name  
ever abides.'

'Who is hidden in all things?  
Who attains the gates of paradise?  
Whose body and soul blend with God?  
What comes to life at birth?  
What dies when a man dies?  
Whose spirit pervades the three regions  
The nether world, the earth and the skies?'

'God is hidden in all things  
Those that serve Him attain the gates of  
paradise  
Those whose bodies and souls  
Are permeated with the divine Word  
Blend their light with the Light of God.  
Evil-doers perish, are reborn only to die  
Men of God merge with the True One.'

'Why are some to worldly values bound?  
Why do they let themselves be swallowed by  
*maya's* serpent?  
How is the soul lost? How is it found?  
How does one become pure?  
How is the mind's darkness dispelled?  
On these if you give us answers true,  
We'll acknowledge you as our guru.'

'Because of evil counsel to worldly values are  
we bound  
We throw ourselves in the maws of *maya's*  
serpent  
Evil-doers lose their souls, by the godly are  
they found  
Those who find the true guru, dispel the  
darkness in their minds.  
They erase their egos and are merged into God.'

'If in *sunya's* trance you still yourself,  
a yogi said  
'Your soul will stop its swan-like wayward  
flight,  
Your body will not like a rotten wall crumble  
and fall dead.'

'In the calm of *sahaj's* cave  
You can discover the True One,  
Sayeth Nanak, the True One loves the truthful.'

'What prompted you to leave your home  
And become a wandering *udasi*?  
Why wear you this hermit's garb?  
What is the merchandise in your store?  
How will you take us to the opposite shore?'

'In search of the saintly men  
I became a wandering *udasi*,  
In the hope of getting a vision of the Divine  
I donned this hermit's garb.  
Truth is all the merchandise I have in my store,  
Nanak says, with the saintly shall we get to  
the opposite shore.'

'Man, by what devices did you change the  
course destined for you.  
How single-minded did you this aim pursue?  
How did you worldly hopes and desires  
eschew?

How did you find the divine light within  
yourself?  
A man who knows no yoga is like a man  
without teeth.  
Life is hard as steel, how can he bite on it  
and live?  
Nanak, ponder over these questions and the  
right answers give.'

'Since I was born in the house of the true guru  
I escaped the wheel of death and rebirth.  
The destined course of my life was thus  
changed.  
I heard divine music and was entranced  
And became single-minded in my pursuit.  
My mundane hopes and aspirations did I burn







In the fire of the divine Word; to the guru  
I turn  
To find the divine light within me burn.  
Erase the three-tiered division of article and  
action

And you will grow teeth that will bite on steel,  
Nanak says, He is the ferryman, He'll ferry you  
across to salvation.'

'What are your views on the beginning of  
creation?

Where did the Creator-in-trance then reside?  
What were the first glimmerings of knowledge?  
What does in all our hearts abide?

This terrible blot of death how can we burn?  
How be fearless when to our final home we  
turn?

How do we find the seat of *sahaj* and  
contentment?

By what means can our enemies be slain?'

'With the guru's words purge the poison of the  
ego

There will you find real place of rest  
He who through the Word learns of the Creator  
of this Creation

Him will Nanak serve as a slave (for he is blest).'

'Where does man come from?

Where does he go when he dies?

Where does he rest when he attains salvation?

One who can answer these question is a real  
seer

A guru with no failing, a guru without a peer.  
How can we find the reality of the Ineffable?  
How do we cultivate love for the guru's words?  
Nanak, reflect and your views state on these  
questions

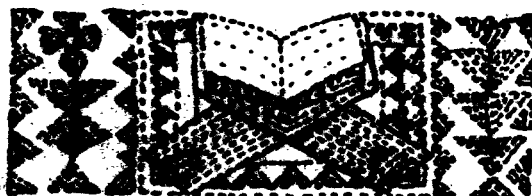
How does the Creator evaluate His creations?'

'By divine command does man come into the  
world

By divine command does he depart

By divine command he remains merged in  
God.

From the true guru does he learn  
The wage of truth to earn,



Through the divine word he achieves  
salvation.'

'The beginning of the beginning staggers the  
imagination

It can only be described as indescribable  
wonder.

In the profound stillness of *sunya*  
God came to in-dwell within Himself.'

'Through the guru's instruction free yourself  
of desires

Let triumph over desires be the emblem you  
wear;

Know that in every heart that beats  
The Lord of life hath His mansion.

It is through the guru's teaching  
We merge in the Formless One.

By the gentle path of *sahaj*  
Attain God, purest of the pure.

A disciple who serves his guru and no other  
Will succeed, says Nanak, that is sure.

He who questions not the divine command  
But accepts it as a wonder beyond seeing  
Will understand the reality of things and  
beings.

He who effaces his ego,  
Of attachments is made free  
Within whose heart is truth enshrined  
He alone is a real yogi.

'He the formless and the immaculate  
From *nirguna*—above qualities  
Became *saguna*—the repositor of all qualities.'

Hereafter the question-and-answer pattern of  
*Siddha Goshta* gets somewhat confused. There  
are long soliloquies, sometimes repetitive inter-  
rupted by further questions—also frequently  
repetitive. I have consequently thought it best  
to summarize the contents of the longer pas-  
sages and reproduce only a selected few.

Nanak states that the service of the guru has  
its reward in the union with God. This is  
achieved through knowledge of truth, removal  
of doubt and duality and the conquest of

desires. While the saintly merge with God, the  
self-willed spend their days without finding  
any moorings i.e. the guru's instruction; they  
stumble along the path of evil, they are not  
united with God but continue in the cycle of  
death and rebirth.

The saintly (*gurmukh*) not only achieve god-  
liness for themselves, but they are also able to  
instruct and influence others to take to the  
path of moral rectitude. It is not necessary to  
be an ascetic or a celibate to achieve union  
with God: one can lead a life of prayer and  
devotion doing one's ordinary work and dis-  
charging obligations to one's family.

The way to salvation lies through the divine  
word *sabda* and the worship of the name of  
God—*nam simran*. One who is imbued with  
the name of God conquers his ego and achieves  
salvation through union with God. Being  
imbued with the name of God is therefore more  
rewarding than performing penances, acquir-  
ing occult power or book-learning.

'How did life begin?' asked one yogi. 'With  
air we drew in our first breath,' replied Nanak.  
'You exhort everyone to take a guru,' said  
another, 'who is your guru?' Nanak replied:  
'The *sabda* or the divine word is my teacher.  
Through the *sabda* I worship God by ceaseless  
adoration. Through the *sabda* I know God,  
through the *sabda* I live in the world without  
being infected by the world's values; the *sabda*  
helps me overcome my ego.'

'If teeth are made of wax, how can they bite  
on steel?' asked the yogis, meaning thereby  
that the path to salvation is hard and one must  
steel oneself by ascetic austerities to be able to  
tread it. 'How can one live in a house of snow  
when one's clothes are aflame?' they asked,  
meaning thereby that the soul, since it is  
encased in a body subject to passions, has little  
chance of salvation. 'Where can one find a cave  
wherein the mind can be tranquil?' they asked.

Nanak replied: 'If you exorcize the ego,



doubt and duality, you will grow teeth strong enough to bite on steel. Flames of passion can be doused by the consciousness of God within. Fear of God destroys pride of self. As soon as the divine word *sabda* and God find a place in the heart, mind and body are cleansed, the venomous fires of lust and anger are put out and so is man prepared to receive the grace of God.'

The yogis continued their questions in cryptic form. 'Wherefrom comes the light of the moon which is itself only the house of snows and shadows? And wherefrom does the sun get its searing heat? How can the mind (moon) and the reason (sun being the symbol of knowledge) overcome the fear of death?'

Nanak replied: 'The repetition of *sabda* illumines the mind with radiance; from the guru learn to treat joy and sorrow with equal indifference and the fear of death will cease to gnaw into your vitals. Above all, know *nama*—the name of God. With *nama* overcome sorrow and fear of death, dispel doubt and duality. Worship *nama* as you breathe till breathing becomes like an Aeolian harp. Then with a thunderclap will open the tenth orifice and eternal light come flooding in. Thus will you be gently merged in God. You will attain *sunya* which is also the fourth state—*turiya avastha*.

'*Sunya* is the great stillness within and without and pervades the three regions. It is in the state of *sunya* that a human being is identified with God.'

On being further questioned on the status of those who attained *sunya*, Nanak replied, 'they are like the Creator who created them. . . outside the wheel of birth, death and rebirth. . . they hear the beat of drum unbeaten by hand and are in tune with the Infinite.'

The guru further elucidated the difference between the *gurmukh* (the saintly) who in their humility accept guidance from a guru and the *manmukh* who burn in conceit and never get to know the essence of reality.

The yogis questioned Nanak on the validity of their own beliefs. What is the *mantra* which helps man cross the fearful ocean of life? Where does human breath (life) which the yogis believe when exhaled goes the length of ten fingers from the nostrils reside? How can the mind be made stable? How can we see something which is admittedly beyond the range of vision?

'The divine *mantra* is within us,' the guru replied. 'God is invisible as the air and like it everywhere about us. God is born *nirguna* (without attributes) and *saguna* (with attributes). The mind is purified and stabilized when it becomes the abode of *nama*. The guru will teach you how to cross the fearful ocean of life and prove that God in life is the same as God in the life hereafter. Although He has no form or colour and casts no shadow, He is not illusory. Our lives (the exhaled breath that the yogis spoke of) are sustained by God.

'In order to discover the invisible and infinite God, it is vital that we rise above the threefold nature of qualities and actions (*satvik*, *rajsik* and *tamsik*), through the *sabda*, rid the mind of ego and pride, acknowledge God as the one and only Master and cultivate love for Him. Then by His grace shall we have the mystical experience of partaking of union with Him.'

'If air is the substance of life,' asked the yogis, 'wherefrom does air itself draw sustenance?'

'*Sabda* is the true sustenance of life,' replied Nanak. The guru then expounded his views on the importance of prayer, self-control, truth and grace. 'Hunger for truth consumes other hungers and removes sorrow,' assured Nanak.

The yogis continued their questions. 'When there was neither a heart nor a body, where did the mind and breath reside?'

'In the stillness of *sunya*,' replied Nanak. 'Everyone and everything was a part of God prior to creation. It is the greatest of untold tales.'



'Then tell us how the world came into existence,' they demanded.

Nanak replied:

'Out of the ego came the world  
When it forgets the Name it will suffer sorrow;  
The saintly think over the essence of  
knowledge  
They burn out their ego in the flame of the  
divine Word;  
Their bodies and souls are cleansed, their  
speech refined,  
They remain blended in the True One.

'Through the Name of the Lord (who is  
nameless) one achieves detachment  
And enshrines the truth within one's mind.  
Without the Name there never can be any  
union

Ponder over this in your heart and find.'

The guru further expounded his views on  
the qualities of a *gurmukh*, the importance of  
*sabda* and *nama* to effect union with God, and  
the role of the *satguru* as a guide.

The *Siddha Goshta* ends with the praise of  
God and a prayer for the gift of His Name.



103



# Hymns from Bara Mah

The practice of composing the Twelve Months (*Bara Mah*) was once common amongst Indian poets. It gave them an opportunity to describe nature and human moods and moralize at the same time. Several exist in the Punjabi language, of which Guru Nanak's in *Tukhari Raga* is most highly rated. It is believed to be amongst the last of the Guru's compositions.

## CHET (March-April)

*Chet basant bhala bhavar suhavde*

It is the month of Chet  
It is spring. All is seemly,  
The beauteous bumble-bees  
The woodlands in flower;  
But there is a sorrow in my soul  
For away is the Lord my Master.

If the husband comes not home, how can a wife  
Find peace of mind?  
Sorrows of separation waste away her body.

The *koel* calls in the mango grove,  
Her notes are full of joy  
But there is a sorrow in my soul.

The bumble-bee hovers about the blossoming  
bough  
(A messenger of life and hope)  
But O Mother of mine, 'tis like death to me  
For there is a sorrow in my soul.

How shall I banish sorrow and find blessed  
peace?

Sayeth Nanak: When the Lord her Master  
comes home to her  
Then is spring seemly because she is  
fulfilled.

## VAISAKH (April-May)

*Vaisakh bhala sakha ves kare*

Beauteous Vaisakh, when the bough adorns  
itself anew

The wife awaits the coming of her lord  
Her eyes fixed on the door.  
'My love, who alone can help me cross  
The turbulent waters of life,  
Have compassion for me and come home,  
Without thee I am as worthless as a shell.  
Love, look thou upon me with favour  
And let our eyes mingle  
Then will I become priceless beyond compare.'

Nanak asks: 'Whither seekest thou the Lord?  
Whom awaitest thou?

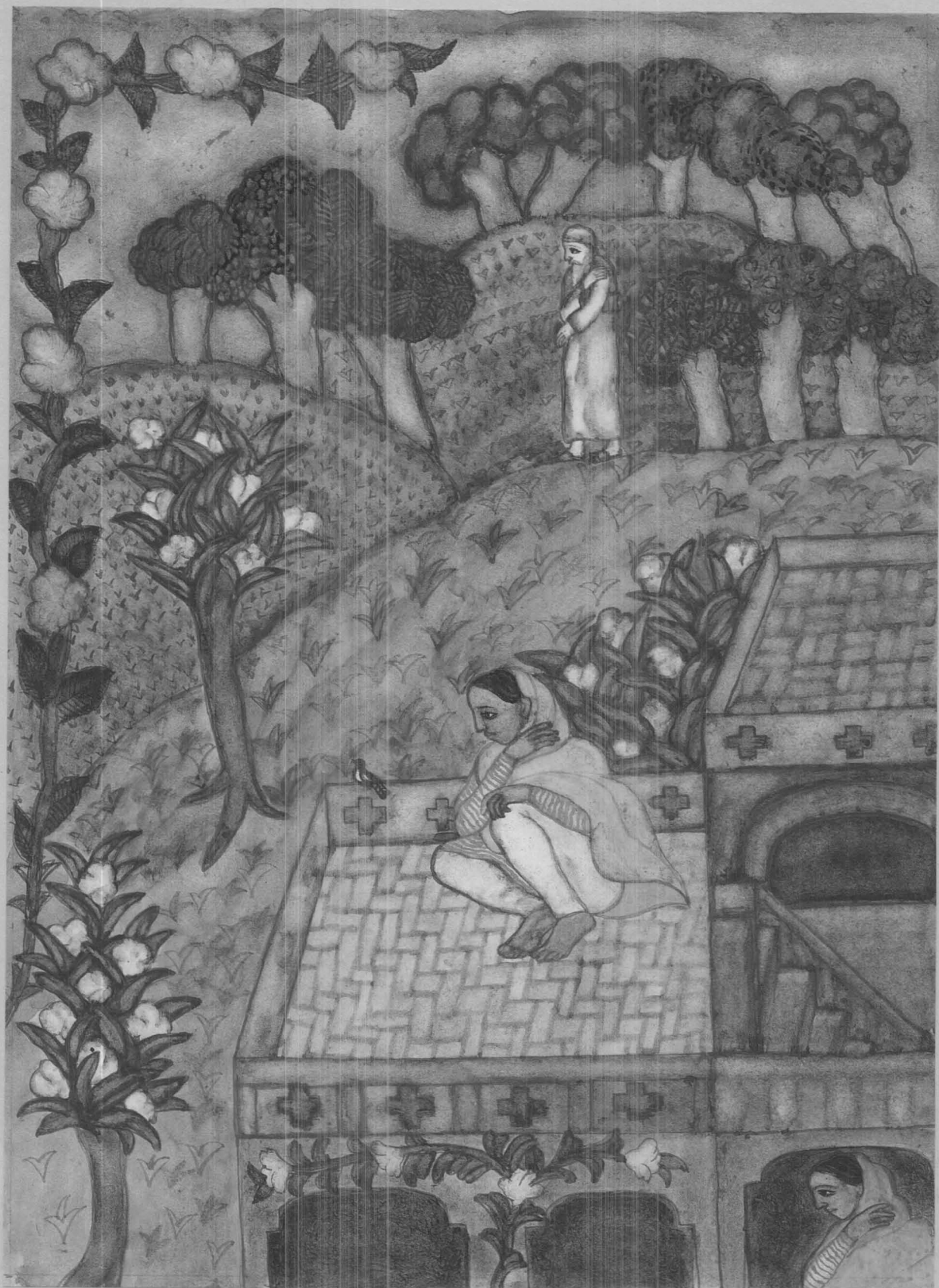
Thou hast not far to go, for the Lord  
Is within thee, thou art His mansion.  
If thy body and soul yearn for the Lord,  
The Lord shall love thee  
And Vaisakh will beautiful be.'

## JETH (May-June)

*Mah jeth bhala pritam kiu bisrai*

Why forget the beloved Lord in the good  
month of Jeth?





The earth shimmers in the summer's heat  
 The wife makes obeisance and prays  
 Let me find favour in Thine eyes O Lord,  
 Thou art great and good  
 Truth manifest and unshakable,  
 Of attachments art Thou free.  
 And I, lowly, humble, helpless.  
 How shall I approach Thee?  
 How find the haven of peace?

In the month of Jeth, says Nanak,  
 She who knoweth the Lord  
 Becometh like the Lord.  
 She knoweth Him  
 By treading the path of virtue.

#### ASADH (June-July)

##### *Asadh bhala suraj gagan tapai*

In Asadh the sun scorches.  
 Skies are hot  
 The earth burns like an oven  
 Waters give up their vapours.  
 It burns and scorches relentlessly  
 Thus the land fails not  
 To fulfil its destiny.

The sun's chariot passes the mountain tops;  
 Long shadows stretch across the land  
 And the cicada calls from the glades.  
 The beloved seeks the cool of the evening.  
 If the comfort she seeks be in falsehood,  
 There will be sorrow in store for her.

If it be in truth,  
 Hers will be a life of joy everlasting.  
 My life and its ending depend on the will of  
 the Lord.  
 To Him, says Nanak, I surrendered my soul.

#### SAVAN (July-August)

*Savan saras mana ghan varsai rut ae*  
 O my heart, rejoice! It's Savan

The season of nimbus clouds and rain,  
 My body and soul yearn for my Lord.  
 But my Lord is gone to foreign lands.  
 If He return not, I shall die pining for Him.

The lightning strikes terror in my heart.  
 I stand all alone in my courtyard,  
 In solitude and in sorrow.

O Mother of mine, I stand on the brink of  
 death.  
 Without the Lord I have neither hunger nor  
 sleep  
 I cannot suffer the clothes on my body.  
 Nanak says, she alone is the true wife  
 Who loses herself in the Lord.

#### BHADON (August-September)

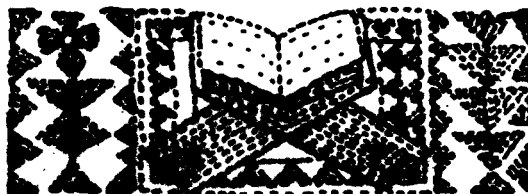
##### *Bhadon bharam bhuli bhar joban pachtani*

In the month of Bhadon  
 I lose myself in a maze of falsehood  
 I waste my wanton youth.  
 River and land are one endless expanse of water  
 For it is the monsoon the season of  
 merry-making.

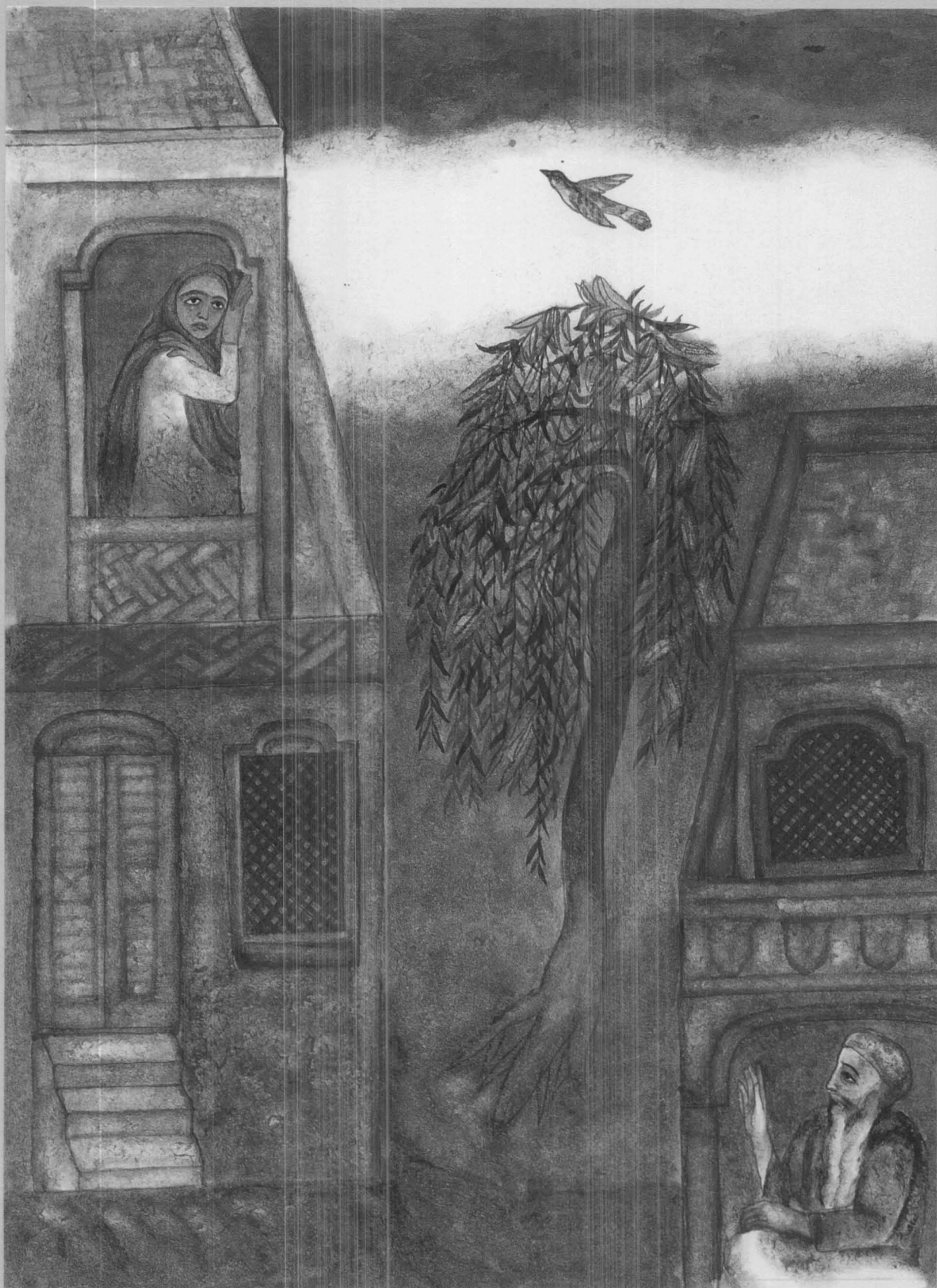
It rains,  
 The nights are dark,  
 What comfort is it to the wife left alone?  
 Frogs croak  
 Peacocks scream  
 The *papecha* calls 'peeoh, peeoh.'  
 The fangs of serpents that crawl,  
 The stings of mosquitoes that fly  
 Are full of venom.

The seas have burst their bounds in the ecstasy  
 Of fulfilment.  
 Without the Lord I alone am bereft of joy,  
 Whither shall I go?

Says Nanak, ask the guru the way  
 He knoweth the path which leads to the Lord.







### ASAN (September-October)

*Asan au pira sadhan jhur mui*

It's the month of Asan  
O Master come to me  
I waste and shall die.  
If the Master wills,  
I shall meet Him.  
If He wills not,  
In a deep well shall I be lost.

I strayed on to the paths of falsehood  
And the Master forsook me.  
Age hath greyed my locks  
I have left many winters behind.  
But the fires of hell still lie ahead.  
Whither shall I turn?

The bough remaineth ever green  
For the sap that moveth within day and night,  
Night and day, reneweth life.  
If the name of the Lord courseth in thy veins,  
Life and hope will forever be green.  
That which cooketh slowly cooketh best.

It is Asan, says Nanak,  
It is trysting time. O Lord,  
And we have waited long.

### KATAK (October-November)

*Katak kirat paiya jo prabh bhaia*

In the month of Katak  
Will I get my due.  
What pleases the Lord  
Is all I merit.  
The lamp of wisdom burneth steadily  
If the oil that feeds it  
Be reality.  
If the oil that feeds the lamp  
Be love,  
The beloved will meet the Lord and be fulfilled.  
Full of faults, she dies not  
Nor gains release

It's death after virtuous life.  
That doth the Lord please.

Those who are granted the worship of Thy  
name  
Merge in Thee, for Thou art then,  
Their aim and end in life.

Nanak says: Lord, till Thou grant vision  
And burst the bonds of superstition,  
One watch of day will drag on like half a year.

### MAGHAR (November-December)

*Maghar mah bhala hari gun ank samave*

The month of Maghar is bliss  
For her who is lost in the Lord.  
She singeth songs of joy and fulfilment.  
Why not love the Lord who is eternal?

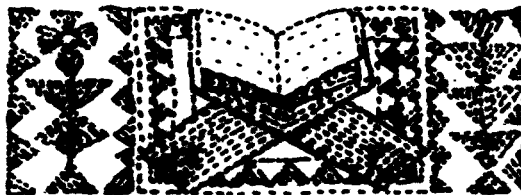
He who is eternal, wise, omniscient is also  
the master of destiny.  
The world is agitated because it hath lost faith  
in Him.  
She that hath knowledge and contemplates  
Loses herself in Him.  
She loveth the Lord, the Lord loveth her.

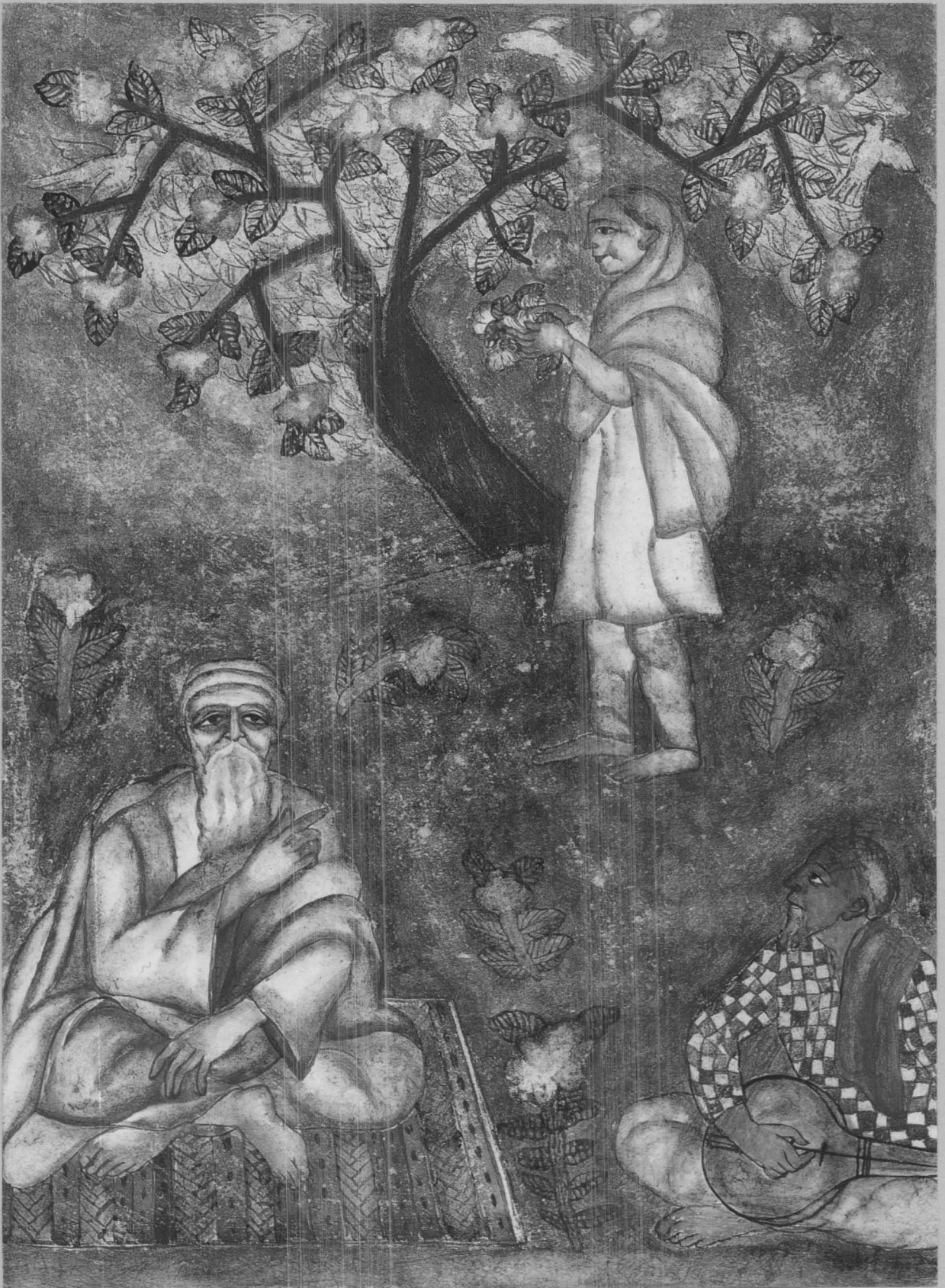
In song and dance and verse, let it be the name  
of Lord Rama  
And sorrows will fly away.  
Nanak says, only she is loved by her Lord  
Who prayeth, not only with her lips  
But worships Him with her soul.

### POKH (December-January)

*Pokh tukhar pade van trin ras sokhai*

As in the month of Pokh  
Winter's frost doth freeze  
The sap in tree and bush, so does  
The absence of the Lord  
Kill the body and the mind.  
O Lord, why comest not Thou?





I praise through the guru's Word  
Him that gives life to all the world,  
His light shines in all life born  
Of egg or womb or sweat or seed.  
Merciful God and Master! Thy vision grant  
And grant me salvation.

Nanak says, only she mingles with Him  
Who loves the Lord, the giver of life.

#### MAGH (January-February)

*Magh punit bhai tirath antar jania*

In the month of Magh  
I made my ablution,  
The Lord entered my being.  
I made pilgrimage within myself and was  
purified.  
I met Him.  
He found me good  
And let me lose myself in Him.  
'Beloved! If Thou findest me fair  
My pilgrimage is made,  
My ablution done.  
More than the sacred waters  
Of Ganga, Yamuna and Triveni mingled at the  
Sangam,  
More than the seven seas.  
All these and charity, alms-giving and prayer,  
Are the knowledge of eternity that is the Lord.'

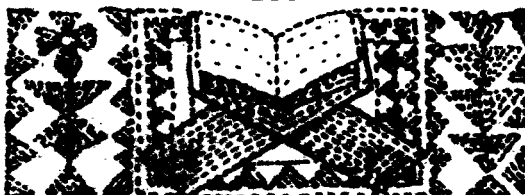
Nanak says, Magh is the essence of ambrosia  
For him who hath worshipped the Great Giver  
of life.  
Hath done more than bathe in the sixty and  
eight places of pilgrimage.

#### PHALGUN (February-March)

*Phalgun man rahsi prem subhaea*

In the month of Phalgun  
She whose heart is full of love  
Is ever in full bloom.  
Day and night she is in spiritual exaltation  
She is in bliss because she hath no love of self.

Only those that love Thee  
Conquer love of self.  
Be kind to me  
And make my home Thy abode.  
Many a lovely garment did I wear.  
The Master willed not and  
His palace doors were barred to me.  
When He wanted me I went  
With garlands and strings of jewels and  
raiments of finery.  
O Nanak, a bride welcomed in the Master's  
mansion  
Hath found her true Lord and Love.



## Appendix 1

# Religious Inheritance

Nanak's schooling was in Sanskrit and Persian—and he composed some hymns in Persian and used Sanskrit vocabulary. Being a Bedi (or one who has knowledge of the Vedas), Nanak certainly had had occasion to study the sacred Hindu texts. Even a casual reading of his hymns show that Nanak was well acquainted with the Rig Veda, the Upanishads—notably the *Mandukya*, *Chandogya*, *Prasna*, *Katha*—and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Mehervan's *Janam Sakhi* also refers to dialogues with holy men of different faiths and persuasions—Hindus, Muslims, Bhaktas, Sufis and different orders of ascetics. Nanak's hymns confirm some of these meetings: many hymns are in question-and-answer form or deal specifically with customs of a particular sect; sometimes they are based on similar compositions of other saint-poets.

All these influences were what contributed to Nanak's religious inheritance and the social and political conditions which moulded his thinking. From the earliest times recorded in history, India has been known as the land of the Hindus: and Hinduism has held different meanings for different people—and even these meanings have been changing with the times. To the intellectual elite it has been the Vedas, the Upanishads and the schools of philosophy. To the mass of people it has been the pantheon of gods and goddesses, rituals and the rules of caste. At the lowest level it has consisted of worship of reptiles, animals and trees. Hinduism has had its quota of critics and reformers as well as its champions. The significant fact of the history of Hinduism is that critics, reformers and even denigrators were, despite efforts to the contrary, unable to completely break away from Hinduism: to be Indian was to be Hindu. The only exceptions

to this rule were conquerors who came from outside India and refused, as long as they could, to make a compromise with Hinduism. The most important of these outsiders were Muslims.

Islam was introduced into India soon after it was promulgated by Prophet Mohammed in Arabia—first by Arab seamen and traders and then by Arab, Turkish, Mongol, Persian and Afghan invaders. It was a violent introduction because Muslims looked down upon Hinduism as an idolatrous invention of the devil deserving destruction. This policy the early Muslim invaders pursued with varying degrees of iconoclastic fervour. They levelled Hindu temples to the ground, raised pyramids of Hindu skulls and rammed Islam down the throats of the populace. It took the Muslims many years of bloodshed to realize that force steeled a people's hearts, but could not convert them.

At this stage Muslim missionaries took over the business of conversion from the soldiers. Amongst the most successful of Islam's missionaries were an order of mystics known as Sufis—from *suf* meaning wool (they wore garments of coarse wool as a badge of poverty). The Sufis emphasized those aspects of the Koran and the Hadith (traditions) which drew them closer to the people amongst whom they lived—for the cardinal principle of Sufi belief was *talif-i-kulub*, the stringing together of hearts. For a change Hindus who had been terrorized by the Muslim invaders, found some Muslims wanting to befriend them. The Sufis promised the new converts equality, and redeemed their promise by raising the lowest of the Hindu untouchables to the social level of the highest Arab. By the fifteenth century, there were a dozen orders of Sufis in northern India of which four, the Chishtiya, Qadiriya, Suhrawar-





diya and later the Naqshbandia, were the most important. In the Punjab, the city of Multan and the town of Pak Pattan became the headquarters of the Sufi orders, of which the Chishtiya became the most popular.

The Sufis, like other orthodox Muslims, believed in one God but instead of the aggressive '*La Ilaha Illallah*' (there is no God but Allah) they quoted the Koran to say the same in different words: 'Wherever ye turn there is the face of Allah.' (Incidentally Nanak used almost the same words: '*Jit dhir dekhan, tit dhir maujood*.' ) They believed in the brotherhood of mankind which embraced both Muslims and non-Muslims. They believed in a mystic union with God through ascetic discipline and the chanting of litanies (*dhikr*) under the guidance of a religious teacher called a *peer*. Through the influence of the Sufis, Islam and Hinduism drew closer to each other.

A similar movement, Bhakti (worship), had started from the Hindu end towards Islam. Bhakti was as old as Hinduism itself. It was one of the three approaches to God recommended by the *Bhagavad Gita*, the other two being knowledge and action. It became a powerful weapon to combat the coldly logical theories of the Jains and the Buddhists. The Hindu renaissance was a two-pronged attack. On the rational plane it was led by Shankara (eighth century A.D.). Shankara was the expounder of *Kevaladvaita*—pure monism. His teaching can be summed up in three pithy statements: *Brahm Satyam, Jagan Mithya, Jivo Brahmaiva na parah*—Brahma or God is real, the world is unreal, the individual self is the only supreme self, no other. In Shankara's monism there was no room for idols, neither for the caste system nor for many of the practices of the Brahmins. He believed in the one indefinable, omnipresent God.

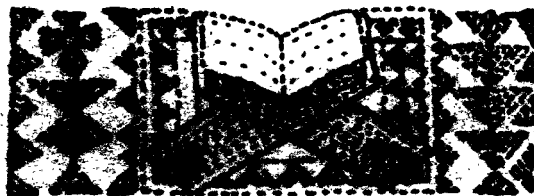
The message of Shankara was taken up by Ramanuja (A.D. 1016-1137). Ramanuja was a worshipper of Vishnu and advocated the path of Bhakti or devotion over knowledge or action as the way to salvation. He travelled extensively all over northern India. Thus the movement found a protagonist in Ramananda, who went a step further by accepting Muslims and Hindus of the lower caste as his disciples. These disciples, notably the Muslim Kabir (A.D. 1398-1518), spread the message of Bhakti

across the Indo-Gangetic plain into Punjab. There was religious fervour all over the country and people who knew little or nothing of each other were saying the same sort of thing in their own language in distant parts of India. There was Chaitanya in Bengal; Jnaneshwar, Namdev and, later on Tukaram in Maharashtra; Mirabai in Rajasthan; and Sadhana in Sindh. On the emotional plane a parallel movement had been started by the saint-poets of Tamilnad—the Alvars (worshippers of Vishnu) and the Adiyars (worshippers of Siva); both stressing Bhakti through music and singing. Very soon the influence of the Bhaktas was far greater than that of orthodox Brahmanical Hinduism.

The main points of the teaching of the Bhaktas were that God was one and the only reality; the rest was *maya* or illusion. The best way to serve God was by absolute submission to His will. The best way to find His will was through the guidance of a spiritual teacher, a guru. The best way to approach God was through meditation and through singing hymns of love and praise.

Punjab, at the time of Nanak, was almost equally divided between Hindus and Muslims—the vast majority of whom were recent converts from Hinduism. Muslims were the dominant class but had long ago ceased trying to impose their faith on non-Muslims; this was the prerogative of the newer wave of invaders. Hindus and Muslims had succeeded in defining the terms of mutual co-existence based on the feeling that India was the homeland of both communities and it was better to emphasize what was common to their faiths. This for the Hindus was Bhakti, for the Muslims Sufism. It was in the meeting of the twin streams of Bhakti and Sufism that Nanak made his pilgrimage. He criticized exclusiveness and intolerance and meaningless ritual of both Hinduism and Islam; he lauded what they had in common; belief in the One indefinable God, and the casteless equality of mankind; the necessity of taking a guide (guru of the Hindus, peer of the Muslims); the futility of ascetic isolation and penance; the possibility of combining religious life with domestic and social obligations; and the mystic realization of God through singing hymns of praise in the still, quiet hours of early dawn.

Guru Nanak makes several references to the wretched state of affairs in northern India in his



day. The nominal rulers were the Lodhi Afghans but the writ of the Sultans did not run far beyond the walls of their citadels. Local governors had set themselves up as independent monarchs and mulcted the poor as and when they liked. Invasions of savage tribes from Central Asia had become a regular feature. In 1398 the Mongol Taimur had sacked and slaughtered his way through the Punjab to Delhi and back again. People lived in terror behind mud-walled fortresses of towns and villages. Guru Nanak described the times in one of his compositions:

The age is like a knife. Kings are butchers.  
They dispense justice when their palms are filled . . .  
Wealth and beauty which afforded men pleasure  
have now become their bane . . .

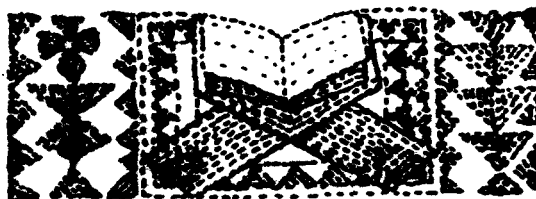
Decency and laws have vanished; falsehood stalks abroad . . .

The vocation of priests is gone and the devil reads the marriage vows.

Praises of murder are sung. Blood is shed in place of saffron, . . .

Nanak witnessed the result of the invasion of the Mughal Babar in 1526 and the final destruction of the Lodhi dynasty. He wrote: 'Then came Babar to Hindustan. Death disguised as a Mughal made war on us. There was slaughter and lamentation. Did not Thou, O Lord, feel the pain?'

This for Nanak was *Kaliyuga*, the dark age, when: 'true men speak the truth and suffer for it; when penitents cannot perform penance; when he who repeats God's name meets obloquy.'





## Appendix 2

# The Message

Guru Nanak's message is conveyed in his hymns. And his hymns tell us about Nanak's views on God, the genesis and purpose of life, life hereafter, man's duty to the society in which he lives and the means of achieving union with God. Nanak stated his concept of God with utter clarity:

There is One God  
His Name is Truth.  
He is the Creator,  
He is without fear and without hate.  
He is beyond time Immortal,  
His spirit pervades the universe.  
He is not born,  
Nor does He die to be born again,  
He is self-existent.  
By the guru's grace shalt thou worship Him.

This is the *mool mantra* (the root *mantra*) and the basic creed of Sikhism. The *Adi Granth* begins with the statement and it is repeated as a preliminary to every prayer. *Japji*, the morning prayer considered by most scholars to be the epitome of all that Nanak taught, further re-affirms the guru's belief that God is beyond the reckoning of time and space and is the only reality—*sat* (meaning both truth and reality).

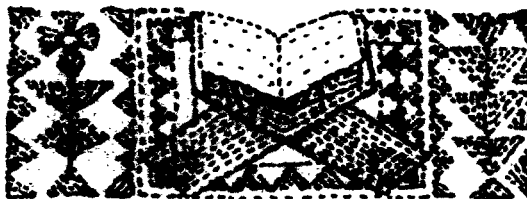
Though the oneness of God was not unknown to Hinduism, Nanak's emphatic and repeated rejection of the Hindu pantheon including the trinity of Brahma (Creator), Vishnu (Preserver) and Shiva (Destroyer) as three aspects of God is reminiscent of the monotheistic fervour of Islam. Nanak accepted the Hindu (and Muslim) terms for God. The Sanskrit Brahman became Nanak's Brahma and he invested Brahma with a dual role. Before Brahma created the cosmos, He was *parabrahma* (supreme

Brahma) in a state of deep trance and was above all qualities: *nirguna*. Brahma came out of His trance and created the world. Although He still remained *nirankar* (without form), He now became *saguna*—repository of all qualities.

Nanak's monotheism brooked no compromise. He illustrated his point with many a metaphor: 'Just as there are many seasons but the sun that makes them is one; so, O Nanak, the Creator hath many garbs, but is one.' God is like one large lake in which blossom many varieties of water lilies. Nanak's God pervades His cosmos. Man has but to master his own mind, have faith, and then, whichever way he turns his eyes, he will see God.

Nanak invests his Brahma with all the qualities he can think of because his God is above error, peerless in His beauty, bounty and mercy; unquestioned in His power to create, preserve and destroy; He is the repository of all knowledge. And, of course, being without a beginning and an end, He is immortal.

Despite his incomprehensibility, Nanak's God is a good, warm and friendly God. He is the father, lover, master and husband. Call him as you like; Allah, Rab, Rahim, Malik like the Muslims; or Rama, Govinda, Murari, Hari as do the Hindus; Nanak however, called Him *Aumkar*. Taken from the Upanishads, the mystic syllable *Aum* is said to contain all the consonants in the range of human voice and, hence, 'all speech' and thus becomes the perfect word to represent God. 'As all parts of a leaf are held together by a central rod,' says the *Chandogya Upanishad*, 'so all speech is held together by *Aum*.' Nanak describes *Aumkar* as the 'Creator of Brahma, Consciousness, time and space and the Vedas; the emancipator and the essence of the three



worlds.' Very soon this elusive concept becomes a symbol to emphasize the singular quality of God; *Ik Aumkar*—there is One God.

Nanak's favourite names for God are *Sat Kartar*, the True Creator or *Sat Nam*: the True Name. He accepted the Vedic notion of creation. He talks of a time when complete darkness brooded over utter chaos. When there were no worlds, no firmaments and only the will of the Lord pervaded. When there was neither night nor day, neither sun nor moon, only God in everlasting trance; neither air nor the waters; neither sound nor source of life; neither beginning nor end; neither growth nor decay; no swell in the ocean, no rivers winding their way. Only the Lord spoke of Himself; only He the unknowable had knowledge of Himself. When He so willed, He shaped the universe—out of the unmanifested, immovable ground of his Being, to us and within us, He made Himself manifest.

According to Nanak, God Himself changed His own nature and function after the creation of the world. And God is Himself the author of duality and delusion. In the dawn hymns, the *Asa-di-Var*, he says, 'He Himself created creation and gave currency to the Name and then assumed a second nature and with pleasure regarded his creation seated on His prayer mat.' And it is God who, having set the world life into motion, threw in it, as it were, *moh thagauli*: desire—rather like the opiate pill thugs used to render their victims insensible.

'*Amal galola kood ka ditta devan har*': the Great Giver Himself gave us the pill of falsehood. We forget death and, for four short days, indulge in pleasure. The temperate abstain, find Truth and the court of God. Thus both good and evil emanate from God; man's role is to choose the one and avoid the other; to follow the ordinances of God and earn His grace.

Nanak accepted the Hindu theory of *Samsara*—of birth, death and rebirth. He used a picturesque simile to describe this process—'Just as the pots of a Persian wheel go down, fill with water as they come up, empty and go down again,' so is life—a pastime of our Lord.

Nanak's God is *nirankar*—formless and therefore beyond description. The best one can do is to admit one's inability to define Him. But the fact that He is beyond our descriptive or definitive pow-

ers should not prevent us in our pursuit of truth and reality and treading the path of righteousness.

One aspect of God that Nanak emphasizes more than any other was His being *sat* (meaning both truth and reality) as opposed to *asat* (falsehood) and *maya* (illusion). Thus God becomes both a spiritual concept and a code of life. If God is truth, to speak an untruth or to be false to anyone (including oneself) is to be ungodly. A good Sikh therefore must not only believe that God is the Only One, Omnipotent and Omniscient Reality, but also conduct himself in such a way towards his fellow beings that he does not harm them—for hurtful conduct such as lying, cheating, fornication, trespass on a person or on his property, does not conform to the truth that is God.

In equating God with the abstract principle of truth, Nanak avoided the difficulty encountered by other religious teachers who describe Him only as the Creator or the Father: If God created the world, who created God? If He is the Father, who was His Father? But Nanak's system had its own problems. If God is truth, what is the truth? Nanak's answer was that in situations when you cannot decide for yourself, let the guru be your guide.

Next to belief in God, Nanak demands of his followers implicit faith in their guru. This is in keeping with the Sufis *Peer-Mureed* and the Bhakti's *Guru-Chela* tradition. Without the guru as a guide, insists Nanak, no one can attain *moksha* or release. The guru is the goad that keeps us on the straight and narrow path of truth for man is like a rogue elephant and must be kept from running amok. The guru applies the salve of knowledge, *gyan anjan*, to our eyes so that we can see the truth that is God; he is the divine ferryman who ferries us across the fearful ocean of life—the *bhava sagar*; he interprets the ordinances of God and shows the difference between the genuine and the counterfeit. The guru instils the fear of God in his disciple so that out of that fear may spring the love for God. The guru or the *satguru*—the true guru—is just a shade below God.

Nanak describes the qualities one should look for in a guru. 'Take him as guru who shows the path of truth; who tells you of the One of whom nothing is known; who tells you of the divine Word.'



Nanak was often asked if he acknowledged anyone as his own guru. 'Yes,' he replied, 'from the day breath came into my body the divine Word has been my guru; I endeavour to make my senses serve Him as if they were His disciples.' Nanak claimed that God spoke through His gurus as He did through Nanak. 'I speak as Thou hast bidden me to speak.'

Although Nanak admitted of no other guru for himself save God and claimed to be God's mouth-piece, he was careful to keep God and guru apart. The guru is mortal, not divine; he is to be loved, respected and consulted but not worshipped; he is essentially a philosopher, guide and teacher, not a reincarnation (*avatar*) of God, nor in any way related to him. Nanak referred to himself as the bard (*dhadi*), slave or servant (*chakar*) and even a dog (*kookar*) of God.

The guru's function is not only to bridge the gulf that separates man from God but also direct him in his conduct towards his fellow men. Nanak did not believe in asceticism or penance as a means of enlightenment. 'Be of the world but not worldly,' he says over and over again.

Nanak no doubt abandoned his family when he first launched on his spiritual quest and often left it when he was away on his travels, but he always came back to it. He propagates the *grihasta dharma* or the religion of the householder. He advocates the company of holy men, the *sadh sangat*, as an essential requisite of righteous living. And though he equates truth with God, he puts righteous behaviour even above truth:

*Sachon ore sabh ko  
Uppar sach achar.*

(meaning) Truth above all,  
Above truth, truthful conduct.

'Meeting and company of the good is the real pilgrimage,' says Nanak, 'because then you sing songs in praise of the ineffable Lord.' A life of detachment is strongly recommended: you can live in the midst of your family and yet not allow yourself to be enmeshed in a way that precludes God. The more you involve yourself in the love of your kith and kin and in pursuit of gold, the more you will be absorbed by them to the exclusion of God. In this world full of people with desire, your only

hope is to overcome desires. In fact, says Nanak, in a society which is fettered by attachments, the best way of attaining union with God is to release yourself from the bond of attachment.

Nanak's *sadh sangat* or the society of righteous men made no compromise with institutions such as the caste system which not only vitiated the relationship between man and man, but also ran counter to Ordinances of God who is the embodiment of truth. Nanak denounces the caste system in no uncertain terms. He refused to grant an audience to people unless they first broke bread in the community kitchen or the *Guru-ka-langar*, where the Brahmin and the untouchable, the Muslim and the Hindu sat alongside as equals. He is equally critical of concepts of purity and impurity that spring out of notions of higher and lower categories of human beings.

Nanak believed both in the theory of *karma*—according to which a person received his deserts for acts committed in earlier births—and in the free play of human will. Human birth, he argues, is a precious gift. It is the opportunity God gives man to escape the cycle of birth, death and rebirth and be united with Him. Such an opportunity may not come a second time and should not, therefore, be bartered away for mere baubles. You must strive to set your own affairs in order for no one else can do it for you. The saintly know that this endeavour should be the pursuit of truth, contentment, kindness and faith. 'With your own hands,' says Nanak, 'carve out your own fate.' He believed in the fundamental goodness of human nature which could be brought to its fullness under the guidance of the guru.

Though God Himself is the author of delusion and duality that befalls the human mind, He has also given us the means to tear the veil of illusion, know the truth and be united with Him. Man's main obstacle in the path of union is his own ego, the sense of the 'I am'. This ego is the root of all sins; it produces lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. But its power to do evil is more than matched by its power to do good. Under the guidance of the guru it can be canalized into overcoming itself, of stilling the wayward flights of fancy that are characteristic of the human mind and thus preparing it for the mystic experience which reveals God.



The process of overcoming the ego has of necessity to be a gentle one—that which cooks slowly tastes sweetest, and the slow and gentle method is the one by which the mind achieves equipoise. All that remains after that is to invoke the Name of God and the process of union is complete. To Nanak, the Name is the supreme remedy for all ills.

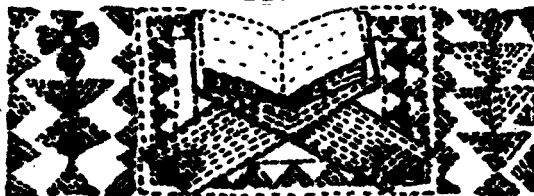
The Gita advocated three alternative paths for salvation: that of action, of knowledge and of devotion, Guru Nanak accepted the path of Bhakti, laying emphasis on the worship of the Name. 'I have no miracles,' he said, 'except the name of the Lord.' But worshipping the Name means, for Nanak, much more than a parrotlike repetition—it implies understanding the words of the prayer and making them the rule of life. This requires three things: the realization of the truth within the heart; its expression in prayer; and detachment from worldly things.

Nanak believes that man's real battle in life is fought with himself. 'Use knowledge as a double-edged dagger,' he says, 'then will base desires sub-

side within the mind.' And once the mind becomes subservient to the will, it will become the abode of the Name. And the Name, according to Nanak is worth more than all pilgrimages to 'holy' rivers because in the worship of the Name the heart is delved into—and the heart is the shrine of God and the sanctuary of divine knowledge. 'As the blind use a stick, so do I use the name of the Lord to feel the path that leads to God,' says Nanak.

'Conquer your mind,' continues Nanak, 'and you will conquer the world.' For then, gently, will the mind become the repository of the Name and the cycle of birth, death and rebirth will end by union with God.

To help discipline the mind, Nanak advocates listening to hymns. He advises his followers to rise well before dawn and listen to the soft strains of music under the light of the stars. The stillness of the ambrosial hours, says Nanak, is the best time to have communion with God.



# Glossary of Terms

**Arti:** A form of religious ritual in which a trayful of oil lamps (symbolizing the cosmos) is waved in front of the deity. It is usually performed at sunset before the gods go to their rest. Sikhs have adapted Arti using flowers instead of lamps and usually perform it at the end of a two-day continuous reading of the *Granth* (*Akhand Pothi*).

**Born in the house of the true guru:** Implies absolution from acts of previous lives and a new life lived strictly according to the preaching of the guru.

**Brahma:** The Creator: one of the three aspects of the Hindu trinity.

**Chakvi:** Ruddy Sheldrake (*Casarca ferruginea*), found near water usually in pairs. During the day they generally rest, sitting and standing about together, and at night they feed, often separating in the process. This has given rise to the legend that in the pairs of Brahminies or Chakvi birds are enshrined the souls of erring lovers doomed as punishment to remain within sight and hearing but separated by the stream. The ordinary call which is freely uttered in a loud rather melodious *a-onk*, which for purposes of the legend is considered to be the form of the names of *Chakwa* and *Chakwi*, and the lovers are credited with the eternal query in hope *Chakwa aunga* (*Chakwa*, shall I come?) answered sadly in the terms of the punishment, *Chakwi na ao* (no, *Chakwi*) From: Hugh Whistler: *Popular Handbook of Indian Birds* (fourth edition).

**Chatrik:** Mythological bird said to slake its thirst by drops of rain, also known as *Chatak* in Sanskrit.

**Chet:** (March-April) the *Salvadora persica* (peeloo) is in blossom in the Punjab countryside.

**Cowrie shell:** Smallest currency unit.

**Dharamshala:** A rest house.

**Digambar:** Sky-clad, or naked order of Jain hermits. To the Jains all life is sacred.

**Father's house:** Or *peha*; a metaphor for life on earth. Life hereafter is the real awakening to which we

are led by the groom after death.

**Feeding crows:** A part of the obsequial ceremonies amongst upper caste Hindus.

**'From the five elements take their quality...':** From the sky, purity; from fire, power to burn dross; from the earth, patience; from water, cleansing property; from air, ability to treat everyone and everything alike.

**Gorakhnath:** Gorakhnath and his order were pledged to celibacy.

**Jap:** Literally recitation.

**Ka'ba:** The Sanctum Sanctorum in Mecca.

**Kamadhenu:** The name of the god Indra's cow which granted anything asked of her.

**Karma:** By the law of Karma we get what we deserve. *Gunas* are qualities or characters of things and are of three kinds:

- (a) *satvik*: pure and harmonious;
- (b) *rajsik*: active; and
- (c) *tamsik*: sluggish and dark.

Thus while talking of human beings the body is *tamsik*, the emotions *rajsik* and mind *satvik*. The three-fold division has innumerable applications.

**Kos:** An Indian unit of measurement.

**Lanka:** The kingdom of Ceylon whose palaces were said to be made of gold. It was conquered and destroyed by Rama, the hero of the Sanskrit epic, *The Ramayana*.

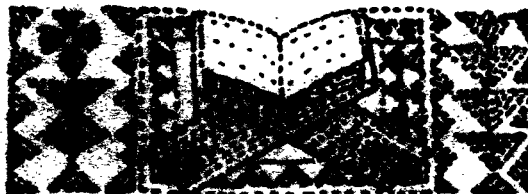
**Maya:** The illusion of the sensuous world.

**One God: Ik Aumkar;** the concept of the mystic syllable *Om* or *Aum* is taken from the Upanishads.

**Our enemies:** The ones within us: lust, anger, greed, hatred, attachment and pride.

**'Put upside down your begging bowl':** When a beggar does not want alms, he puts his begging bowl upside down.

**Sahaja:** Equipose; *Sahaja avastha* the state of equipose known both to Sufis: *fana-ma al-baqa*; and to Hindus: *turiya avastha*.



**Sangam:** The point at which the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers meet.

**Sarang:** Or the *Papecha* is the hawk-cuckoo (*Hierococcyx Varies*) which according to legend drinks only rain water. It begins to call as spring turns to summer. Its cry rendered as *peeh, peeh* (beloved, beloved) is understood as yearning for God, and for the gift of rain. Englishmen call it the brain-fever bird.

**Shiva:** The Destroyer; one of the three aspects of the Hindu trinity.

**'Six schools':** Jogi, Jangam, Jaivra, Sanyasan, Bairagi and Madari.

**'Sixteen kinds of beauty aids':** In ancient texts, sixteen is the conventional number of aids to beauty.

**'Six the gurus':** Kapila, Gautama, Kannada, Jaimini, Patanjali and Vyasa.

**'Six the sacred texts':** Sankhya, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Mimamsa, Yoga and Vedanta.

**Swan:** Symbolizes the human soul.

**Ten holy days:** Hindu practice prescribes the days in the year (including Dussehra) as the most auspicious for pilgrimage and bathing in the Ganges and other holy rivers.

**Tenth gate: Dasam Duar.** The body has nine natural gates (orifices); it is therefore the tenth through which divine light enters the body.

**Thirty-three million gods:** A conventional number of gods according to Hindu theology.

**Udasi:** One disillusioned with the world, a renouncer.

**Vermilion:** Vermilion or *sindhoor* powder is daubed in the parting of the hair by married women as a symbol of *suhag* (matrimonial bliss). A Hindu widow's head is shaved and often, at the time of her husband's death, she was wont to throw dust on her head and break her bangles.

**Vishnu:** The Preserver; one of the three aspects of the Hindu trinity.

**Vyasa:** Reputed to be the author of one of the Vedas.

**'We bathe our gods':** Hindus bathe the idols of their gods and daub them with saffron and sandalwood paste. In this hymn the Guru has used the Hindu ritual to convey his message.

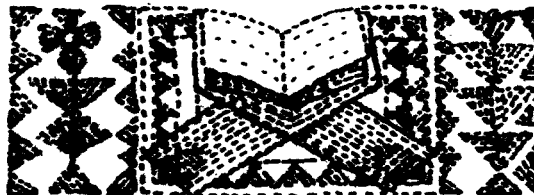
**Wretched outcaste:** *Dumani* is a woman of the lowest caste who bathes corpses.

**Yashodhara:** Foster-mother of Krishna — who was the reincarnation of Vishnu.

## Pronunciation Guide

dan : daan  
gyan : gyaan  
isnan : isnaan  
jap : jaap  
maya : maayaa  
nam : naam  
rabab : rabaab

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# Notes on the Colour Plates

No. 1 (facing page 2): *'One Evening in July ....'*

Pictured is Guru Nanak as a young man immersed in singing hymns to God. The artist has drawn inspiration from various Punjabi folk art forms such as the traditional *phulkari* embroidery.

No. 2 (facing page 8): *'He blessed the swans and bade them godspeed ....'*

The landscape is particularly interesting here. The sparse vegetation, the treeless vista all make one think of Central Asia through which the swans migrate. Incidentally the swan, or Guru Nanak, also symbolizes the soul.

No. 3 (facing page 20): *'As a beggar goes a-begging ....'*

The colours of this painting are particularly arresting — the rose pinks and the turquoise make an unusually rich and harmonious combination. This perhaps hints at one poor in material goods but rich in spirituality.

No. 4 (facing page 26): *'Come my sister let us embrace ....'*

The two women who form the central image in this painting are dressed in clothes and in colours that evoke the essence of Punjab. The verdant landscape and the distant hills all speak of a land bordering the Himalayas.

No. 5 (facing page 36): *'A fish in the deep and salty sea ....'*

The artist has used a vivid palette of blues in this painting to depict the vast ocean, the cosmos,

and the Lord who is present everywhere. The lotus, the swan, the sun and the moon are symbols of eternity.

No. 6 (facing page 42): *'Love thy Lord as the Chakvi loves the sun ....'*

The monsoon looms over this painting as the Chakvi bird flies up in search of the elusive sun.

No. 7 (facing page 46): *'As Krishna sporting in the hands of Yashodhara ....'*

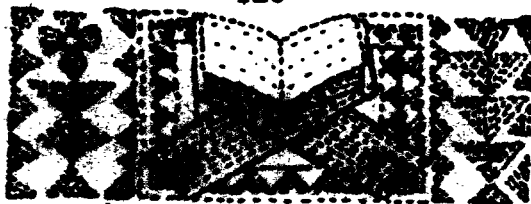
The god Krishna was made much of as a child by his foster mother, Yashodhara. The animals sketched in the background of this painting tell us that Krishna was once a cowherd, and the two jars in the foreground remind us of the lovely folktale which gave the child Krishna his epithet: 'butter stealer'.

No. 8 (facing page 52): *'Like birds at dusk settling on trees ....'*

This painting has a profound serenity as the colours of dusk settle about it. The artist's sense of detail is particularly evident here in the carefully etched leaves and the different postures of the birds as they nestle down for the night. Not forgotten is the squirrel as it too hurries home.

No. 9 (facing page 64): *'He first conquered Khorasan ....'*

In complete contrast to the one gone before is this painting which burns with activity. Apparently drawing inspiration from the narrative style of miniature painting, the artist has shown three different events in the same frame





— Babar's invasion of Hindustan; the fear and helplessness on the faces of those anticipating the invasion; and Guru Nanak, in the calm after the storm, expressing his sorrow.

No. 10 (facing page 70): *'Black buck, listen to me....'*

The exquisite drawing of the black buck hints at the miniature paintings of fifteenth century Central Asia. Guru Nanak bends protectively over the black buck.

No. 11 (facing page 80): *'I plaited my tresses....'*

In this painting the artist creates a multi-faceted picture by using shadow and mirror images that are not quite shadow and reflection.

In the interior of the house, the geometric patterns of Punjabi folk art are specially visible. The latticed window is unusually evocative of the countryside.

No. 12 (facing page 86): *'The firmament is Thy salver....'*

The artist illustrates what is surely the most beautiful of hymns. The use of a myriad blues here is particularly significant for not only does blue in most religions imply sanctity, but also, among the Sikhs, dark blue turbans are worn by the *granthis* or readers of the holy *Guru Granth Sahib*.

No. 13 (facing page 96): *'The yogis took their seats....'*

The vibrant colours in this painting not only reflect the lively debate between Guru Nanak and the yogis, but also depict different religions and shades of opinion. Of particular note are the traditional Punjabi patterns woven on the dhurries.

No. 14 (facing page 104): *'It is spring.'*

The artist has used miniature painting conventions and bright colours to depict the season of spring. The yellow in the painting is significant for this colour, in Punjab, stands for spring.

No. 15 (facing page 106): *'Without the Lord I alone am bereft of joy....'*

The upward flight of the bird, in this painting, contrasts with the pensive expression on the woman's face. That it is the monsoon is evident in the leaden grey skies and the verdant green earth.

No. 16 (facing page 108): *'The bough remaineth ever green....'*

After the monsoons is one of the pleasantest seasons in Punjab with the heat and dust of summer washed away by the rains, and the chill of winter yet to come. The earth is still moist and green and fruitful.

Note the figure of Mardana, the musician, who has remained almost constantly at Guru Nanak's side.



# Acknowledgements

'I bring from the East what is practically an unknown religion,' wrote M. A. Macauliffe in his preface to his monumental six-volume study, *The Sikh Religion*, published in 1909. Since then literature on the Sikhs, both historical and religious, has itself reached monumental proportions. For many years Sikh scholars confined themselves to writing in Punjabi, leaving English interpretation of their faith and history to Englishmen. After World War I Indian scholars through their researches gave a new and national orientation to Sikh history. In the distinguished band were Sita Ram Kohli, Indubhusan Banerjee, Hari Ram Gupta and Ganda Singh. The pace of research and re-interpretation gained momentum with the years.

It was quite some years after the publication of Macauliffe's work that Indian scholars ventured into the field of Sikh religion. Macauliffe had been very painstaking but in his anxiety to avoid hurting the religious susceptibilities of the Sikhs he recorded every myth, miracle and legend ascribed by gullible rustics to their gurus — who themselves had vehemently denied having any occult powers. An even more serious objection to Macauliffe's work was his rendering of the Sikh's sacred hymns. Macauliffe chose to be literal rather than literary. As a result some of the most beautiful religious poetry in the Punjabi language was robbed of its haunting melody and was reduced to long-winded, banal prose. Macauliffe

made Sikh theologians conscious of the fact that if Sikhism was to be properly explained to the English-speaking world, it would have to be done by the Sikhs themselves, combining knowledge of their own scriptures with a sensitive feeling for the English language. A beginning was made by Khazan Singh with *The History and Philosophy of Sikh Religion* (1914). Raja Sir Dalit Singh and Sir Jogendra Singh also wrote books explaining Sikhism. These publications, however, had limited impact outside the Sikh community. This was unfortunately also the fate of the more authentic writings of Professor Teja Singh. It would be no exaggeration to state that the UNESCO-sponsored translation, *Sacred Writings of the Sikhs* (Allen & Unwin) published in 1960, was the first real presentation in the English language by Sikh scholars of the hymns of the Sikh Gurus. It stimulated interest in Sikhism and encouraged other scholars into trying their hand at translating the *Granth Sahib* in its entirety. Although the *Dasam Granth* (containing the writings of Guru Gobind Singh) still remains to be translated, the 300th birth anniversary of the guru in 1966 was marked by the publication of over a hundred books and brochures eulogizing him with extensive quotations from his writing. It can be said that most of the literature on Sikhism is now available in English.

Why, then it may well be asked, this collection of hymns?



Of the 974 hymns of Nanak in the *Adi Granth*, the UNESCO publication has a selection of only 97. Some of these were originally translated by me but the Board of Translators made certain alterations which did not have my approval. I have learnt by experience that translations cannot be rendered by teams of translators though they can be improved by successive translations (as I hope mine will be). In the present case a much larger and a more representative selection of Guru Nanak's hymns has been made and I have assumed the entire responsibility of rendering them into English. The selection of hymns was made in consultation with the late Sardar Gurmukh Nihal Singh and the translation was finalised

by me after considering suggestions made by him and Dr Surinder Singh Kohli, Head of the Punjabi Department of the Punjab University, Chandigarh. Shri P.R. Kaikini was kind enough to go over the translations and help me polish them.

I would like to place on record my gratitude to the Guru Nanak Foundation, particularly to the Secretary, the late Sardar Karnail Singh, who with words of encouragement and admonition kept prodding me to keep to schedule, and to UNESCO for agreeing to sponsor the work — and so giving me an opportunity to pay my homage to my Guru.

Khushwant Singh

